RAY'S CRETE SUBSTACK

Matala, the Hippies and Joni.

RAY BERRY

JAN 06, 2025

A few years ago, I wrote an article about Matala and was amazed at the response, I share it with you now . . .

275 thoughts on "*Matala and Joni Mitchell.*"

1. **marni Jackson | April 11, 2008 at 2:14 am Edit**
   I'm a Canadian author, at work on a nonfiction book that includes a section on Matala in 1969. I was there for three weeks or so in the winter.
   Has anyone figured out when in 1968-69 Joni Mitchell stayed there? And whatever happened to Mr. Raditz?
   What did the Mermaid cafe serve, besides potato omelettes and raki? What happened after Stelios went to jail?
   I'm curious about anyone's memories of that winter in Matala.
   Marni
   Reply
   - **Rick Chelew | October 1, 2009 at 8:33 pm Edit**
     Hello Marni,
     Just ran across your request. Still writing? I was 17 years old hitching around Europe and North Africa in 1969 and 1970. Coming across on the ferry from Athens to Irakleon, probably February of 1970, my cabin mate happened to be Cary. I was there for a couple of weeks during that time. The Mermaid was the coziest, most friendly place, especially on the rainy days. Everyone would hag out there.
     I kept a journal throughout my travels and have it somewhere, possible with more info if you are interested.
     Reply
     - **Marni | October 16, 2009 at 12:09 am Edit**
       Hi Rick
       Thanks for alerting me to the responses on your excellent website – I had forgotten to check back in. And thanks so much for the RS interviews, and the Henry Dalitz one – I had scouted them out elsewhere but it's good to roll them all out together.
       Yes, I'm still writing the book. It has a contemporary focus as well and I'm not sure how all the Joni stuff will work with the material (basically I'm comparing my own coming of age in my twenties to my son's generation's ramblings, or lack thereof…).
       I've got a stash of letters I wrote home from Matala, and I was there in February and into March, 1970. It seems as if that was around the time JM was there too – maybe we

overlapped. I was going through boyfriend issues and perhaps wasn't too alert to comings and goings…
But based on my research, and my own time there, I've written an affectionate faux Joni diary of her time in Matala….that's where I think she got into the sound of the Appalachian dulcimer that runs through Blue, among other things…When it is
entirely cooked and done, you might be curious to read…
Book is scheduleld to be published in Canada in fall 2010.
Best
Marni

- **Jan | January 21, 2010 at 6:18 pm Edit**
  Nice to find this site. Joni was there in April of 1970. Easy to pinpoint because on a trip back to Iraklion the news stand cover was Kent State. Rick, do you remember the battery operated record player at the Mermaid? Pass the hat each evening to buy fresh batteries and listen to John Mayall the next morning at draggy half speed. Rarely, for some special occassion, the cafe fired up a little gas generator to run bare bulbs on bare wires strung through the low branches. Usually it was just the light from a Coleman in the middle of the yard. Daytime food came from the old lady "you want san-weech?" who kept the live snails in the cardboard box next to her front door. No lid on the box and several times a day she went and gathered up the slow moving escapees.
  Did anyone there then keep going East? Out of all the Googlable stuff online, I can find no reference to the "Blue Room" in Old City Jerusalem. It was a fine time to be young and moving, except for the politics and the war.
  Best regards to all, Jan

  - **Rick Chelew | October 1, 2009 at 10:00 pm Edit**
    Looking back on my notes, I see I was on Crete from early March until early April, 1970,so that would have been roughly the same time JM was there. Strangely enough, I had seen her at the Greek Theater in L.A. just a few months before (Sept. of '69?) opening (solo) for CSNY, then there she was a couple of months later, 7000 miles away, sitting across from me at the Mermaid…
    Food notes from the Mermaid include fresh oatmeal, grilled cheese with onions. of course the omlettes, and always halva, everywhere. (The halva could be obtained from the woman at the little grocery as well–she'd cut of as much as you ordered from a big kilo block). Prices in US$ were so cheap. I was living on less than $3 a day. I have some prices as well, and described some days and characters I met there, along with Cary and JM.
    Reply

- **Nigel! | February 11, 2016 at 6:21 pm Edit**
  That battery operated record player was mine!!All my discs had become warped by the heat in the VW camper so I gave

it to Stellos at the Mermaid.The batteries available then in southern Crete were crap!

- **thzgoodlife | February 11, 2016 at 8:12 pm Edit**
  Your battery operated record player was used by Cary Raditz to play ” Here Comes the Sun” outside my cave the morning of my 19th birthday on December 11, 1969! Maego

- **Liam Collins | June 18, 2010 at 3:25 am Edit**
  Hi there,
  I was in matala in 79 with my mother and younger brother. My mum was a hippie and we lived in the caves untill we were kicked out by the cops and moved to komo beach. We were happy there, the germans had set up a stereo and speakers with ‘the doors’ blasting out the mountain walls while the sun went down. They were compressing hash in the bunkers too. There was a french guy called francois who was on the run from interpol living in our commune, he was grassed up by the local cretian who cooked us omelattes. Hundreds of police turned up one day over the mountain, down the beach, running towards our little hippie group. They were firing their pistols.. Francois ran for it up the mountain but was soon cought and dragged off. We were kicked out again. This time, we went to the other caves with the holes in the ground on top of the mountain above matala village. There were areas of sage and the bees used to humm like crazy every night over this powerful herb. I used to hunt snakes lizards and scorpions which were in abundance. A much more interesting life i think to what we knew before, since our mother had kidnapped us on visiting day from our childrens home in london 1 year previously… We eventually hitchiked all the way back to London. But it began when we were dropped off by coach in Athens. Our mother made my brother and i beg money of american tourists to get food. We squatted a room below the acropolis with no water or electricity. We were eventually arrested, amongst other dissasterous things that happened to us so we fled and stowed away on a ship from piraeus to crete.. i’m trying to write a novel about my crazy life and this greece experience was only one part of many weird and wonderful things that we went through.
  Reply

  - **Sean Coleman | July 13, 2016 at 5:09 am Edit**
    I would love to hear more of your story and exchange ideas on the book thing
    herosmydog123@gmail.com if you want to exchange info.
    All the best

  - **Liam | July 13, 2016 at 2:42 pm Edit**
    Hi Sean
    Sure.. it would be interesting to share the experience we had.
    I’ve sent you an email.

All the best.
Liam

- **Stelios | September 14, 2010 at 2:24 am Edit**
  Hi there,
  I'm Stelios from the Mermaid Cafe and I live in California with my wife and 2 sons. Please write to me if you have any questions about what happened to me after I went to jail.
  Yasoo,
  Stelios Xagorarakis
  949 722-8643
  Reply

  - **Susan | September 14, 2010 at 6:09 pm Edit**
    Hi Stellios, My friend Mauro was also sent to jail (from Matala) in 1974 or 5. I returned to Crete and visited him at a rural jail on the other side of the island. It was a working farm and I could see him and others working in the fields. I was able to visit a couple of times and give him a little money that he was hoping would help shorten his time there. Do you remember my friend ? Best, Susan

    - **Bobby | September 14, 2010 at 6:59 pm Edit**
      Dear Stelios,
      Do you remember a man named "Scotty" at Matala? He was one of the original hippies who lived in the caves at Matala in the 1960's. He has been called "The Last of the Hippies". Anyway, I was able to track him down. He is in ill health and lives in a monastery on Crete where here is cared for by monks. I was able to conduct two interviews with him. If you would like to read the interview and see the photos of him, go to my website at:

http://www.bobscretanadventure.blogspot.com

1.
   - I hope you enjoy reading the interview.
     Sincerely,
     Bobby

- **Stelios | September 15, 2010 at 6:31 am Edit**
  Dear Susan, I would like to know, when were you in Matala? 1969? 1970? I left in 70. I went to a different town. They call it Igios Nicolos. Then I met a girl from California, Georgeanne. She was teaching English in Iglios Nicolos. We got married in Crete, and stayed there for 4 years. It is a long, long story, and now we are living in Costa Mesa, California. I have 2 sons, and 3 grand-sons, and I am involved with 7 health food stores, and water for Africa. The song is stuck in my head, "the wind comes from Africa", and now we are working with Africa. I was in jail for less than 2 days. I don't think I have had the pleasure of meeting your friend, or maybe I knew him if he was there

in 69 to 70. I learned a lot of things in my life, and a lot of good stories. I have a great time in Matala.
Thank you,
Stelios

- **Susan | September 15, 2010 at 4:32 pm Edit**
  Hi Stelios, I was there in the spring of 1973. I left when the police climbed the cliff to my cave in the early hours of the morning. I was able to evade them but the heat was on and it was time to move on. I went to Israel and then overland to India and Nepal. Had very little money but those were the days….oh, the stories! nice to hear some….best, Susan
- **Nigel | December 6, 2010 at 2:30 pm Edit**
  Hi Stelios-I too was in Matala in 1969 and have fond memories of the Mermaid and Joni Mitchell.Were you in her cave with a whole group of people were smoking a huge dustbin like pipe that fogged the air and she sang “The one puff blues”?You and I actually spoke about moving to an island south of Crete called,I think Gavdos.My Grandmother had left me a few hundred pounds and nobody lived there despite there being a small harbour and some deserted houses Impossible then for a foreigner to purchase what I think was the southernmost part of Europe but you were Greek!Who was that splendid man who gave a fantastic lecture on the beach-he was closely involved with the author of Zorba the Greek; however the police broke up the whole crowd.The memories go on.
  I still have a couple of photos of my hotel(cave! and you should have a few 45rpm records that were played at The Mermaid.Don’t think about giving them back as I remember the sun partially melting them into wierd shapes.You had a cute American girl that cooked up a great potato omelette.Was it with you and a fisherman in his boat way out of the bay we spotted a second world war sunken plane festooned with fishing nets?German gun emplacement on the rocky beach at Aghia Gallini;the church at Galini visited by a young Queen Victoria on her way to Cyprus giving thanks for her safety after a storm;the small cave near that church where Daedalus and his son Icarus made their wings before flying to safety in Italy-Daedalus flying too high and the sun melted the wax holding on his feathers.Ah Crete.
  Nigel
  - **Stelios | September 15, 2010 at 6:18 am Edit**
    Yassoo! This is Stelios! Hi, my friend, we have to be thankful to Google for finding us. Right now, I am in California, in Costa Mesa. My phone number 949-722-8643. I have been here for 36 years, in Costa Mesa, California. I was “kidnapped” by a blond mermaid, from Costa Mesa, California. It is a long, long story, but it has been a beautiful experience, all the way. A lot

of adventures, a lot of traveling, and a lot of potato omelets, and the kids love it!

At that time, 1969, we were serving beautiful apple pie, and we had brownies made by a beautiful Canadian lady, and they were done with good stuff brought from India, and mixed like celestial spirits, and everyone got super baked. Those were the days I will never forget, and I had one of the best times of my life, to be with all those blessed souls. I love them. I love their philosophies, and with their philosophies, blended celestial, universal awareness. They lead us to the explorations of higher ideals for mankind, and those are the principles of our existence: good thoughts, good words, good deeds—truth, beauty and goodness, and loving and caring for the whole universe. We are in the universe.

In the last 30 years, I learned how to meditate, and learned a lot of new ideas. I am learning self-realization. I am learning enlightenment, and also humility, and also humbleness, kindness, compassion, and a lot of love.

Joni Mitchel was in Matala, March, April, May and June, 1969. That winter in Matala was a good winter. We had plenty of wine, seafood, and the shepherds bring the best cheese in the world, by goats milk and sheep's milk, mixed together, and the winter was good and kind, just windy from Africa, from time to time. It was a good experience for me, to be with the great people at that time. I will go to Joni's cave, and bring a lot of wine, and the beautiful singing and music, going on for many nights. All the people getting the high spirits, and go "deep" in life. The time went fast.

I left Matala in 1970. I went to Galini (Galini means "calmness") and I made peace with the people of Matala, and then I went back to Galini for a short time, but it was not the place for me. I went to Agios Nicolos, and that is when I met my blond mermaid, and she really took me, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. We swam for many days, and we loved the water, and we loved the beaches of Agios, and the beaches of all Crete, and we explored them all. I had 4 good years in Agios Nocolos. Four beautiful years of enjoying the beautiful waters, all the incredibly beautiful coves, and the small towns, south of Crete, explored Greek islands, different ways, through boats. I was looking for my new home. And, it looks like now I have 2 new homes, one in Crete, and one in California, Costa Mesa, Pacific Ocean. And I am involved with a lot of projects. I have always been an entrepreneur, discovering new thoughts and ideas, and go beyond, and beyond, of this beautiful universe.

1978, we started a health food store in Costa Mesa, with a few Yogis. Some never became yogis, and some, they stayed. And now we will have 7 stores, all organic, natural, no chemicals, vegan, vegetarian, Mother's Market and Kitchen.

Also, I am involved with projects in Africa. We are supplying water well drills to the desert area. We almost supplied to all of Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas. The website is,

http://www.ewdrilling.com

1.
    - I am also involved with some non-profit organizations. They are helping orphanages in India. That organization now has about 500 children. I don't have the name in my head right now, but some day if you need it, we will provide it.
      I have 2 sons, 35 and 30. And, also, I have 3 grand-kids, so I did the duty of being a pop and a grand-pop, and I am still doing my duty.
      It is very interesting to go back, and Google those things, 40 years, and I have a lot of stories. Good stories. They all turned to be positive and I am very thankful that I am alive and I appreciate every second.
      Thank you
      Stelios Xagorarakis
      Reply
    - **Rocky Schmit | June 14, 2011 at 6:35 pm Edit**
      Yassoo! It was good to hear your voice after so many years, Stelios. Could hear that you are doing well and still full of enthusiasm for life… Especially interested to know more about the water project. My son is married to a South African. Her family has a home for a least a hundred children. They shelter the kids, help with their traumas and try to get them into good families. Also teach agricultural techniques. Water is a major problem in some areas….Was after midnite here in Sweden when we talked but think I told you about a song cooking in my heart about that whole Matala experience. Your observations helped get it together. Here is MATALA ROAD as promised:
      MATALA ROAD
      Went down that Matala road full of nostalgies…
      Shoulda stayed back home with my memories
      cuz the road's been paved
      and the caves fenced in…
      Ain't nothin' the same like it used to've been
      down that Matala road.
      Now the Mermaid's gone and the Delphini…
      New restaurants abound
      too fancy for me…
      A hundred hotels and alla them fine
      with toilets indoors
      and room-service wine.
      But the shepherds are gone
      From the mountainsides
      where they blew their blues
      right outa the sky…
      boys agone to the towns
      and there they stay
      aworkin' the crowds atta fish café,
      or

just hangin' around some cabaret
far from the Matala road.
Those old donkeys are gone
unless to fill a scene…
folks are racing around burnin' gasoline.
Planes 'n busses roll in…
tourist destiny
to soak up the sun
by a sky-blue sea
way down the Matala road.
Forgive an old greybeard
for asheddin' his tears for that Matala road
of yesteryears
when a folk wandered in…
fuzzy refugees
lickin' sores of your wars
and histories…
fled down a Matala road
where the fisherman's wife
made coffee for three
then chased us away to go fish in that sea…
She'd scream from the shore
to fill us with fear
of alla dangers around
with Red Beach near!
Down that Matala road
Ah remember those days…
was never so free… could
dive from my cave
straight into the sea
and wash in the waves like a new-born child…
howl up at the moon
with a call o' the wild…
Down the Matala road
up on the cliffs so high
you could catch you a star
and kiss it good-bye…
There was a dulcimer girl
with her long blonde hair
countin' waves like sheep
in the atmosphere…
'n that Gypsy boy with his dancing bear
pink and day-glo green…
Was he really there?
Or was he inbetween
(with his tambourine)
that ole Matala road … and Istanbul?
and faces swim by … a memory comes
with flutes and strings
to a rhythm of drums…
through the smoke 'n years

what lies between
bits and pieces fall… re-create a scene…
Old Matala friend from away back then
if you remember it all…
got total recall…
Then you really weren't there
down that Matala road.
Way down that Matala road…
What ah'm tryin' to say
is seekers will find
what they're missing today…
when you've come to the end
of wherever you are
(some have gone way in…others away out far)
like on the Matala road.
Every cat'll be back:
"Ye reap what ye sow"…
the circle gets closed and then you know
how we felt afraid…
how those mothers prayed
no matter how far
— how long we strayed
On the Matala road.
Take comfort, my friend,
you seek 'n you'll find
tho your heart may be broke'n
ya blown your mind
a miracle waits
in each hand you hold…
Cuz you're never alone — never really
alone
on that Matala road.
Bless you Slelios… Keep helping the hungry… And thirsty…
A former caveman…. Rocky

- **Sean Coleman | July 12, 2016 at 10:22 am Edit**
  Hi Stelios,
  How wonderful coming across so many people that were in Matala. I was there for a couple of months in 1970. I'm thinking it was spring. I can't picture you but if it was you cooking than I know you. Potato Omelets and I do remember the Apple Pie and someone bringing a piece to the Hilton (The big Cave) Joni had left by the time I got there in 1970 but oddly I did catch up with her on Ibiza. So like you I have lived (and continue to live) a great life. I have lived all over the world writing music and studying with masters great and low.The summation of my life would be "He's the luckiest guy ever" For many years I wrote music and then started doing film and TV and it was fun and the money was good. I have never stopped traveling. So in 2006 I got cancer and was told it was

terminal and I had at most a month. Got divorced the dog died and the economy crashed, I was pretty depressed which was lucky or I never would have noticed the monk that would reverse the course of my life. He was a Buddhist Monk and we were in Santa Monica at the beach and as I said it was the perfect time he walked into my life. I lived in LA but he was living on Maui. He invited me to come and stay with him and practice and in return I would teach his son piano and composition and he would teach me Buddhist Philosophy and Mind Control. The cancer disappeared (I took no medicine as it was to late. They said it had thrown Mets to my bones and liver and it was ll gone) but they said it would come back. This led me to Thrangu Rinpoche an enlightened Master who listened to my story and just kept saying how lucky I was because I knew how precious each second was.He sent me to India to work with The Dalai Lama's monks teaching them English in Dharamsala/ McLode Ganj in the Himalayas, so that I could continue my studies under Geshe Sonam Rinchen, HH's #1 teacher, so when I died, I would be near my teacher The Dalai Lama and until then try to be useful. I got stronger and traveled all over India seeking new Masters who would always ask the same question that I had to get right to have a master teach me. The question was " Are you a seeker?" and the answer was yes. All over the world with different Masters of different practices that never crossed paths or compared notes I was asked that simple little question. There is so much more and I am going to try to call you if you re still there. What a sweet little thing that I found this link but as all my teachers would also say " There are no accidents" Well my fellow seekers I look forward to hearing more of your stories. We were all at this one odd place during pretty much the same time. We came from all different places yet this could be a coincidence. Now we seem to be finding each other again. I love a good adventure.

Sean

- **Liam | July 12, 2016 at 5:58 pm Edit**
  Amazing story :)

- **Janette M Hursh | February 15, 2012 at 11:54 am Edit**
  I spent about 3 weeks in Matala with friends both American and Canadian in the spring of 1972. As far as I remember the Mermaid Cafe – with a dead dried fish nailed to a tree as the only decoration – served as you said only potato omelets. A guy with the only other restaurant "Leftterry"? did BBQ on the beach with rabbit livers and lots of wine. We could bring in the gallon bottles and get them refilled. The local bakery was Mama's and she had great sandwiches and awesome (huge slides!) of orange breakfast cake. We all stayed at the local hotel – the only one I think – where we could stash our gear

and sleeping bags then spend the days on the beach. It provided an outhouse and a shower head strapped to a tree… outside. There was also a kiosk in town run by a woman who sold everything. We referred to it as the Matala 7-11. The caves were pretty much off limits by then, but you could still explore them. Every few days a broken-down looking bus we called the stagecoach would show up with tourist who would photograph the “American Hippies” Sleeping on the beach at Matala was discouraged buy the local police so each evening we’d trek over the hill to the Red Beach to sleep every night. Great memories!
Reply

- **Municipality of Festos | October 9, 2012 at 12:10 pm Edit**
  Matala Beach Festival 2013 is on 21-22-23-24 of June,
  A meeting point of all old friends in Matala, here are some links for you to be updated and remember familiar faces.
  http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.231088953626565.51192.204038512998276&type=3
  the 2012 Matala Festival wonderful album is yet to be released very soon.

1.

- dear friends if you would like to be up dated about Matala
  here is an official page of all Matala friends
  http://www.facebook.com/visitmatala
  and official page of the Municipality
  http://www.facebook.com/dimosfestou.gr
  Reply

- **Rita Wilson | March 31, 2017 at 2:19 am Edit**
  Hi Marni…..Here it is 9 years after you post….hope this finds you well! I was in Matala the same time as you and remember you and Greg vividly. Often wonder what has happen to all those wonderful people we met at Eastertide ’69. I’m still in contact with a few, let me know about your writing!
  Rita
  Reply

  - **Georgeanne X. | April 3, 2017 at 9:02 pm Edit**
    Please call Stelios at 949 722-8643, the owner of the Mermaid Café and he would be glad to help you with your book. He lives in California.

- **Laura Pedersen | June 22, 2020 at 7:11 am Edit**

She lived in the caves with Cary, Mark and Barbara. They are friends of mine and one is my sons father, very private people. You can contact me. @ Lauralee5515@yahoo.com. I have sandals they made at Matala leather company.

Reply

- **Rocky Schmit | June 22, 2020 at 1:37 pm Edit**
  Lived in a cave adjacent down one level to the sea from Joni … Was laying low to recover from Vietnam war memories … Was badly beaten by police trying to stop them from wrecking the kitchen extension to Stelios' Mermaid Cafe … Wrote Matala Road Poem to keep some of the magic alive … Went by Raki Nomad back then … Fresh e-mail : rockyschmit@icloud.com
- **stefano | June 25, 2020 at 10:21 am Edit**
  Hello, just to help the memories ..Joni Mitchell was in Matala in March and April 1970 and not 1969…I know that one memeber of the Mamas and Papas arrived there in the same time, more or less…I've been in Matala some years ago and I've talked with the daughter of Mermaid original owner…now there's a restaurant…
  - **Stephen Raubenheimer | August 10, 2020 at 2:10 pm Edit**
    I arrived at Matala 11 Dec 1968 in time for a great Xmas & New year party at Delfini's Taverna (there was no Mermaid Cafe then . I personally bought the large cave with the verandah for $5. Cleaned it and moved in with my girlfriend Martha Costello and a crowd of 8. Named it the Matala Hilton. Martha got hepatitis in February and spent till mid March in the Contagious Diseases Hospital (Nosokomeon in Iraklion. I left Matala late March 1969, and I can confirm that Joni was not there by then.
- **Liam | September 9, 2020 at 2:03 am Edit**
  There were far more interesting things that happened in 1979 in matala than Joni Mitchell being there

  Reply

2. **roger sullivan | April 15, 2008 at 8:47 pm Edit**
   Dear Marni,
   My ex and I were at Matala when Joni got there in either January or February of 1970. There was also a woman named Penelope who claimed to be collaborating, even "ghost writing" some of her work. Although I didn't know Carey very well, I certainly knew who he was and his red hair was often in a turban. I can tell you about the Mermaid where we had breakfast every morning after about two hours of yoga in a dried river bed. These sessions we taught (gratis, of course) by Joe Berg, his last known address was Brooklyn.
   There's more if you're interested.
   Roger

Reply

- **Marni | October 16, 2009 at 12:20 am Edit**
  Hi Roger
  Yes, Yoga Joe- he turns up in Joni interviews and also in the book “Some Girls”, about Carole King, Carly Simon and JM. From my letters of that time, it seems I was there roughly at at the same time.
  I’d love to hear more – how can I reach you?
  Reply
- **amphibious | March 13, 2017 at 9:14 am Edit**
  I was surprised to run into Yoga Joe in Goa in 1982 – he was still recognisable as the bloke who tried to get the freeks in the river bed (in 1968/9) to temper the hedonism with some with some psychic discipline but few managed it.
  It is interesting to read these comments from people who came later – is there anyone from 67-69 reading this?
  I was the bloke who dug out the cave directly beneath the Hilton and found all the graves, skeletons & votive offerings.
  Still keeping on keeping on – hope you are too.
  Reply
  - **Janice Kennedy | March 13, 2017 at 11:24 pm Edit**
    I was on Crete from mid April 1970 till the end of May 1970. I traveled with David from Australia who I had met on the 12 hour ferry ride. We heard about Malala and that Joni had been there but had left. We decided to check it out and I ended up staying there for four weeks. We found a cave right over the water with a plastic curtain and a nice bed dug out for us. I couldn’t figure out why the plastic was there until one stormy night the high water splashed against the plastic. There was no shit cave when I was there, just a shit hill. I don’t remember problems from the police but the tourists were arriving. On Greek Easter, we were sitting in front of the bakery waiting for our morning fresh bread when a tourist bus arrived. We decided to spend the day at Red Beach. Red Beach was ‘clothing optional’ although that day there was only one person wearing a bathing suit. The rip tide was strong that day and I had to struggle to get back to the beach. David and I were getting ready to leave when I noticed the woman wearing the bathing suit was about to play the guitar. I suggested we wait and listen to the chick sing. Well, two notes in and I realized it was Joni. Here she was, my heroine and I didn’ t even realize it was her. She was singing her song that involved a tarot card reader for and older gentleman who was about to read her Tarot. Older? He was probably in his forties. But it was older to me. Later on, I went with David to Iraklion because he was heading back to Australia. Joni and Carey were there as she was leaving also.
  - **Stephan Raubenheimer | August 12, 2017 at 12:06 am Edit**

I remember you arrived in Matala to find all the caves occupied. I was living in the cave (later named ‘ The Matala Hilton’) with my girlfriend Martha Costello & her sister Julia. I am the South African guy who helped you dig out the cave below ours.
In the corner floor recesses we found artifacts as you mention. I remember us finding burial urns, various artifacts & bones, & a stunning oil lamp. I mounted 2 crossbones above the door of our cave and I ceremoniously named The cave “The Matala Hilton”.
I recall you were an Aussie.
I also recall us driving in my Beetle when I hit a horse that poked its head out of the trees, smashed the windshield and almost landed on your lap. I remember your terror & shock, covered in blood.
Martha got Hepatitis, and in May ’69 we moved to the Contagious Diseases Hospital in Iraklion where she recovered.
So Joni must have moved into the Hilton after us. Didn’t know that.
If you are the person, please reply.

- **Stephan Raubenheimer | August 31, 2017 at 11:58 pm Edit**
  I remember you arrived in Matala to find all the caves occupied. I was living in the cave (later named ‘ The Matala Hilton’) with my girlfriend Martha Costello & her sister Julia. I am the South African guy who helped you dig out the cave below ours.
  In the corner floor recesses we found artifacts as you mention. I remember us finding burial urns, various artifacts & bones, & a stunning oil lamp. I mounted 2 crossbones above the door of our cave and I ceremoniously named The cave “The Matala Hilton”.
  I recall you were an Aussie.
  I also recall us driving in my Beetle when I hit a horse that poked its head out of the trees, smashed the windshield and almost landed on your lap. I remember your terror & shock, covered in blood.
  Martha got Hepatitis, and in May ’69 we moved to the Contagious Diseases Hospital in Iraklion where she recovered.
  So Joni must have moved into the Hilton after us. Didn’t know that.
  If you are the person, please reply.
- **Shawn Klug | September 2, 2017 at 3:29 pm Edit**
  Wow. I don’t mean to offend, but your post made me so sad. Digging up these ancient artifacts and mounting the bones of someones ancestors above a cave entrance just seems so incredibly disrespectful and hurtful. I can understand why the Greek people I have spoken to in the

Matala area do not really remember that time fondly and are being more protective now of these historical areas, although they are capitalising on the nostalgia.

- **Stephan Raubenheimer | September 3, 2017 at 12:31 pm Edit**
  Hi Shawn,
  Read Rita Wilson's post of March 31, 2017 for clarity on the destruction of all artifacts & bones by the "Antiquities Police".
- **amphibious | September 4, 2017 at 2:38 pm Edit**
  Stephan – looks like my longer reply disappeared into the ether so a quick reprise.
  I was quite impressed, when digging out my long silted up cave (with all the antiquities – pace Herr Krug below) with a shovel I'd borrowed from a reluctant villager (probably the one who informed the authorities) that, after having broken the handle due to being an urban yoik who'd never done hard yakka, you were so quick to whittle down the truncated shaft while I burned out the remnants from the blade.
  I never told the donor but he can't help but have noticed latterly when using it that it seemed shorter unless he thought that he'd grown a couple of inches…
  Rel the donkey through the windshield – are you sure that was me? I certainly recall the accident, though I forget who the passenger was but he did make a big deal of it.
  I had a large stock of pics from those days which I was looking at several years ago, trying to catalogue for a book. Alas they, and every other pic I'd taken in 50 years, were lost in the bush fires that ravaged my region recently. Along with everything else.
  As the proverb has it, "Now that my treasury has been destroyed, the view of the mountains is no longer obscured."
  It may sound trite but I do feel that way – a bit annoyed but the loss of history (and I am mightily pissed off at the way the entire hippie era is being traduced by the wanker brigade/bread heads) – but, hey, I'm alive and that's gotta be a plus.
  - **Stephen Raubenheimer | January 11, 2022 at 1:55 pm Edit**
    Hey Amphibious don't forget that we both dug out the cave which produced four corner holes holding clay artifacts. I kept an oil lamp with an image of a donkey fighting a lion, and two bones which I mounted crossed above my cave's doorway & baptized it "MATALA HILTON "

3. **Les Irvin | April 16, 2008 at 8:07 am Edit**
   Roger – I'm interested! Send me a message through jonimitchell.com, let's talk…
   Les

Reply

4. **roger sullivan | April 16, 2008 at 11:41 pm Edit**
   Les,
   Saw your picture and mini-bio but how do I send a message to you on that staff sight. Are you collaborating on this book that Marni is writing?
   Roger
   Reply
5. **Paige | April 17, 2008 at 4:52 pm Edit**
   As a big fan of all things Joni, I LOVED reading this story! Thanks so much for sharing it!
   Reply
6. **Dimitris | June 15, 2008 at 9:10 pm Edit**
   i live with all that storys when iam 10 years …i remember all that years (1960 till 1975) …i have meet Mitchell becouse my Uncle Stelios manage the Mermaid Cafe …i still search my “flower power” ..:o)…regards from MATALA
   Reply
   - **Bruce Martel | November 25, 2012 at 7:13 am Edit**
     Hello Dimitris…I was in Matala in the early 70’s and spent many a night at the Mermaid…you almost talked me into staying to help with the cafe’ but I returned to Canada…we listened to Joni Mitchell many nights….you arranged for us to rent a house at the very end of the village overlooking the sea and we were invited to dinner after we agreed to rent the house for a month at a time…we were from Canada…Steve and Bruce….I never forgot you and the Mermaid Cafe’……Bruce
     Reply
   - **Laura Pedersen | June 22, 2020 at 7:14 am Edit**
     Do you remember Mark and Barbara that had Matala Leather Company with Cary?
     Reply
7. **Les | June 16, 2008 at 8:53 pm Edit**
   Hey Roger –
   Send me a message at Les@jonimitchell.com.
   Thanks,
   Les
   Reply
8. **grecofilia | September 11, 2008 at 12:24 pm Edit**
   I was working in Agia Galini, just round the bay from Matala in the summer of 1993. One day I made a visit to Matala with my chum, Norman. We looked all over the village for any signs of The Mermaid Cafe but gave up when it became too hot to walk under the sun.
   We were sitting in the shade of a taverna in the main square, sipping some iced beer and gazing around when my friend nudged me and without speaking pointed to the sign over the building on the other side of the street.
   In large letters it read, ‘Supermarket’ but beneath a worn coat of

paint you could still see the faint red letters that spelled, ‘Mermaid’.
I hope it’s still there.
Reply

9. **Simone Pedersen | September 17, 2008 at 3:15 pm Edit**
   Reading all of your Matala-stories makes me smile. I went there for a breif trip this summer, and even though it is none of what it has been – the hippies being replaced by tourists looking for suntans and cheap souvenirs – I was stunned.
   My friend and I stepped out from under a bazar-like street and into the hot sand. Looking to my right I saw the large painting “Welcome to Matala George – Today is life, tomorrow never comes”. Looking to my right the caves, the beautiful bay. In our minds the tourists suddenly disappeared and we walked around in the 60s, in a time of life and love. The Matala spirit is still alive.
   Reply
10. **Terri McCormack | January 11, 2009 at 7:18 am Edit**
    I hitched into Matala about August 1969 after more than a year travelling in SE and Central Asia. I arrived with a shell-shocked American deserter from Vietnam – is that what Joni Mitchell’s reference to “soldiers” means? She must have come after I left in late October when I ran out of money and it started getting cold in a cave with few facilities. By that time, I’d gone up in the hierarchy to a top level cave which was great for the isolation and views but not so good for toilet expeditions to the scrub behind the cliffs or to the Mermaid for a red wine. By that time, too, European TV crews had arrived and filmed us as we emerged naked from our caves in the mornings. The good times were all gone and we had to move on.
    Reply
11. **Volker | January 28, 2009 at 2:08 pm Edit**
    I was in Matala for 5 times during the last 3 years (will go again in April) and Yes it’s an tourist town but also Yes a bit of the 70′ flair is still there. Also some Hippies which are living in the caves between Matala and the well known Red Beach. For me ‘s no need to visit another place for holiday since I visited at the visit time.
    If You want to visit Matala, make shure to vist it in spring or autumn before or after the high season June – August.
    That’s the time to catch some of the old vibrations, ’cause the town is a little bit quiter.
    There are some pages in the web where You can get actual infos and photos of Matala.
    Sorry this one is in german – but there are some old photos of the 70th:
    http://www.matala-kreta.de/html%20Seiten/Matala_1965%20-%201977.htm
    and some photos of today also:
    http://www.matala-kreta.de/matala1022.htm
    Reply
    - **amphibious | August 31, 2017 at 1:36 pm Edit**

Volker – many thanks for the old photos pre 1970. The later ones showing what it looks like now broke my heart.

Reply

- **Stephan Raubenheimer | February 1, 2018 at 2:28 pm Edit**

  Hi again Amphibious, I was reading your thanks to Volker for the old photos. Would you send me some of the ones you may have of the earlier ones in Matala from Xmas 1968 to May-June 1969. I also took many photos at that time and distributed them to my neighbours there.

  On my way to Pamplona in late June in Barcelona, ran into, and spent the morning on the beach with a red-haired girl named Inge Bellinger who had lived on the opposite side to the caves in Matala. I showed her all my photos of Matala, While I went for a swim she went through my backpack and stole all my photos and emptied my wallet, leaving me penniless. Never saw her again. The photos were priceless & I pine for them to this day.

  Any photos would be appreciated.

  By the way, are you not the Aussie who was with me when my VW Beetle ran into a horse whose head smashed the window on your side leaving you in shock & covered in blood?

  I also think you came with me & 3 others to sell blood in Thessalonika (at $14 a pop).

  Also everyone in Matala at that time surely remembers my green Beetle which had a Springbok painted on the engine cover and had ZA plates. It was mostly the only car in Matala.

12. **Val Weik | February 12, 2009 at 1:39 am Edit**

    I was in Matala last fall 2008. It actually was my most favorite place on Crete. It had a little different atmosphere and the cats were fat and lazy there. I stayed over night and had a look in the tombs, sat and ejoyed the beach. Yes, there were some hippies there selling jewelery. Sorry I missed it in the ’60’s.

    Reply

13. **jack | March 1, 2009 at 1:44 pm Edit**

    I lived in another part of crete in the 70’s in caves. i avoided matala because by that time it was overrun with fake hippies. anyway, i am trying to remember a film made in 69 or 68 I believe that featured the cave dwelling community in Matala. Does anyone remember the name of it? If so, can you email me at mervie2@yahoo.com. thanks ever so much.

    Reply

14. **greta | May 16, 2009 at 4:21 am Edit**

    I was in Matala for 3 months in 1983. It was still pretty much the same as in the 60’s-70’s, except that people were no longer living in the caves. We were all living on a campground. The Mermaid Cafe was still there. Most of the people were German, there were very

few Americans. We would trek to Red Beach for the day. There were 2 modest rooming houses.
I would never go back now. It would break my heart to see it built up as a tourist/semi-resort town. How awful!
Reply

- **Denis larabie | February 27, 2020 at 11:30 pm Edit**
  Yes lots of German wannabe hippies with there pink and purple pants We used to laugh,they all would say we have come here to find our selves. Funny. Talk about fake hippies
  Reply
  - **Anne | February 28, 2020 at 12:55 am Edit**
    you came years too late and think you can judge people by their nationality or outfit? That is the opposit of beeing a hippy in your heart. Maybe you are just hip?

15. **Kev | June 29, 2009 at 3:55 am Edit**
    I first stepped off the noisey fly filled bus from Iraklion Port in 1993, back then the bus would drop you off right in the square. Since then I have returned many times, the village hasn't changed much in appearance and although the place still holds a similar kind of magic to Glastonbury I am afraid the attitude of current day visitors does deminish it somehow.
    Up until the Drachma was replaced by the Euro Westerners could live on little money in Crete, I offer no opinion on whether this is a good or a bad thing but the days when an Englishman could travel to Crete and have a good night out on a fiver are over i'm afraid.
    If you want to visit Matala today you will still find a few relics from it's hippy past including a number of long standing residents such as as French Frank, Scotty and Yorgo the fisherman, although as the years wear on they have worn with them, as have the sculptures on Red beach.
    I think the bar Gecofillia sat in when he saw the Mermaid sign was the Kreta Bar that was until 2007 run by an Austrian Landlady called Micky. I have spent many a good evening sat in the Kreta bar and to me it was the embodiment of the Matala spirit, everyone was welcome and you would meet people from every country under the sun, a worthy successor to the Mermaid.
    If I am thinking of the right place the Mermaid is now part of the bazaar, a kind of a covered street or mini arcade (what the Yanks call a mall). One side of the bazaar faces out to sea and the other towards the square, the supermarket which is actually more of a green grocers shop is run by a nice elderly couple and faces the water fountain, i think it is next to snack bar or maybe a jewellers.
    Reply
16. **mary. | August 27, 2009 at 12:05 am Edit**
    I lived in the caves between matala and the red beach last summer. I went for 3 days and stay for 3 months. Many people stays there. I worked in a bar and in the morning siting with my " hippies" friends over the beach sealing things.. I have to say that Matala has changed a lot, as i hear my father stories, but when you get there, you feel like time stops and you don't care about the noise of the

tourists and the locals disappointment(about not heaving money). If you really want to feel peaceful inside you , Matala is the perfect place.

Reply

17. **Susan | October 15, 2009 at 7:59 am Edit**
    I lived in a small natural cave on the way to Red Beach in the spring of 1973. It was truly a magical time of my life. I became part of a merry band, Mauro, Emma, Paolo, Edson, and Anna. We spoke different languages but we became fast friends and did everything together. Matala enriched my life with love, laughter, and friendship We were the quintessential, international travellers. I went onward with my journey to the east and never saw my buddies again. I still think of them often. I opened a small art gallery and named it the Mermaid Gallery in honour of my idyllic time in Matala. Old, dear friends..are you out there? Joni Mitchell became my mentor. When i need help. I'll play joni and ask her to speak to me ...and she always does. Matala is a major influence in my life even though I have not been there for so many years. It was the start of my wonderful journey.

    Reply

    - **Don Carlson | February 13, 2011 at 9:07 am Edit**
      Hi Susan ,
      I was in Matala in march/April 1973 in the the large clam shaped cave on the cliff left of mama's bakery along with 4-5 others between the main beach and Red beach.I was a blonde long haired canadian boy of 20 in 1973 and Mary Fraser a young scottish girl and three or four others lived in
      that large clam like cave over looking Matala.The memories of Matala are powrful and I will always remember them as one of the best times in my life.I then went onto India thereafter and travelled the magic bus circuit via Istanbul and the puddying shop of I stanbul the hangout for th hippie era in the 60s and early 70s.I keep having this impression of a girl limping around and was wondering if this may have been you.
      Cheers Don Carlson

      Reply

      - **Susan | February 13, 2011 at 5:59 pm Edit**
        Hi Don, I remember your cave well but I don't remember anybody living in it. I was a blonde, long haired, Canadian girl of 19 ….without a limp!….I don't think I arrived on Crete until sometime in April. I also did the pudding shop, India journey…..I can still feel the atmosphere of it all! It was absolutely one of the best times of my youth! I agree… very powerful. We must have just missed each other in Matala….sounds like a song! Best, Susan
      - **Janette M Hursh | February 15, 2012 at 12:05 pm Edit**
        I too remember the Pudding Shop in Istanbul – and the Grand Bazaar! Did anyone make it to the Turkish

bathhouse in the old section of Rhodes in the summer of ’72?

18. **derek | November 25, 2009 at 9:50 pm Edit**
    Visited Matala in the early 1990s and it had a more laid back feel than Agia Ghalini, but not as much as the tiny Agios Giorgios to the west of AG – just two guys who’d been there forever [according to their visitors’ book], a bar and a terrace of 4 apartments, just built. I’m sure all three are very different now, but it’ll still be new for people going for the first time. Enjoy, and stop living in the past.
    Reply
19. **Melanie | December 9, 2009 at 1:38 am Edit**
    I visited Matala in 1990, and fell in love with the place! It was the first time on holiday with my boyfriend and first time abroad, so it will always be the best holiday ever – and we’re still together after all those years! I’ve always had a burning ambition to write a novel and so I’m currently researching for my first novel, which will have a couple of chapters devoted to life in Matala in 1969. Would love to hear from anyone who was in Matala, and indeed Crete during that time. Would also welcome any ideas for websites or books that would be useful. You can email me on melanie@dmwright.karoo.co.uk. Thanks x
    Reply
20. **chrissie | March 25, 2010 at 7:17 pm Edit**
    I was there summer 1968;
    certainly not rich enough to have dined at the mermaid – i had to make do with “manuels shack ‘ on the beach he cooked lovely omelettes and spoilt me with condensed milk sandwich – anyone out there do the same?
    Reply
    - **Liam collins | October 14, 2010 at 11:02 pm Edit**
      He might have been the same guy who cooked for us on Komo beach in 79? Also the same guy who possibly informed on Francois, who tried to out run the 100s of cops who surrounded the mountain then attacked our commune.
      Reply
    - **amphibious | March 13, 2017 at 9:29 am Edit**
      That date would suggest that you might remember “Turtle Man”, said to have been that shape because he was castrated to retain his youthful voice for singing in the church – he would have been the right age, born around WWI.
      There was also a crazy Brit minor aristocrat who paid for his wine, food & broad by painting the most unbelievably detailed mural on what later became the Mermaid, after Delfini’s was closed down by the authorities.
      Reply
      - **Rita Wilson | March 31, 2017 at 2:39 am Edit**
        Yes Delini’s…..no Mermaid when I was there in Spring “69……I was the first bar at the West end of the beach.

- **Stephan Raubenheimer | August 30, 2017 at 10:33 pm Edit**
  We used to get our potato omelettes from his shop – someone said he was a eunuch.
  I remember Delfini's tavern very well (before the Mermaid existed) we all celebrated the '68-'69 New Years Eve there – he was so drunk he refused to take our money. He kept toasting everyone shouting "katastrof" and insisted that we smash all his glassware including his mother's platters on the floor while everyone did Zorba's Dance (punishable by law then).
- **Rita Wilson | August 31, 2017 at 8:03 am Edit**
  Hey Stephen…….I remember three bar/restaurants along the beach. The first on the west end, closest to the caves was Delfini's….it was the night time hangout, with a battery operated record player, retsina and ouzo, breaking plates and lots of dancing. The next place was Costa's, he was the eunuch and kept a skinned lamb hanging on the dining room wall, hacking off pieces as needed for the diners. The last cafe was Mamas and that's where we ate potato omelettes….. at least that's the way I remember it.
- **Anne | August 31, 2017 at 1:11 pm Edit**
  Yes, this is the way I remember it. But I don't remember Costas as an eunuch. He was a communist and god knows what the junta did to ihm.
- **amphibious | August 31, 2017 at 1:17 pm Edit**
  Rita – re compass points, Delphini's was on the **northern** end of the village. The beach and bay faced due west (which is why we could watch the sun set over the sea & Paximallia island – depending on the season it would move across the horizon from L to R then back again) because of the way that portion of Crete thrusts down south.
  My recollection is that Costa's was the preferred meeting place where the elderly fisherman drank tea & raki and whiled away the hours with their worry beads, musing on the strange people who thronged Delphini's which had, in 66/67, been in a different building, slightly nearer the caves.
  There was some heavy dispute (legal? inheritance?) that became quite nasty which led him to then move to the other place. The gazebo on the sand had been burned down, the blackened stumps of the posts remained to fall over in the drunken darkness for many weeks thereafter.
  Can you remember the name of the 3rd cafe, at the opposite, southern, end of the beach? I'm thinking *Manoli's* but that may be imagination, due to a foggy memory.
  It was not Mamma's as she only opened hers in 68 or 69 – possibly in Costa's premises…?

- **amphibious | September 9, 2020 at 5:51 am Edit**
  I found out recently, by reading his obituary – 2019, that he was a scion of the Marquess of Bath!

21. **Vivienne | March 26, 2010 at 7:25 pm Edit**
    I was in Matala in 1973. I arrived in January and left in June with Gerry a Canadian guy who had been living in the caves on the mountains between Matala Beach and Red Beach. We had a little tree that came out of our cave and we placed tin foil on the leaves so that when the wind blew it made a song. Every song seemed different. There were few of us at that time; Roger (the saxophone player) Dominic, a french guy who had deserted the french army, Edwardo, an Italian who lived with Fiona, and Barbara, an american who was writing a book and was renting one of the rooms on the way up to the old blue house. Barbara had a problem with her leg and would walk with a limp. There was also Maria, a German girl who had adopted a dog. Matala in the winter was cold and windy and I remember Nicos (a fisherman who lived in one of the little houses) giving us rugs to wrap around ourselves. We used to go the Mermaid cafe at night and listen to Grateful Dead – there were times when Nicos would invites us into his little house and cook potato omeletes and offer us his Raki. Mama, who used to run the store would warn us when the police would be coming from Mires as most of us had problems with our visas. Mama would also bake the most delicious orange cake. We used to clean the beach and in return Left Terri (who used to own the taverna on the beach) would feed us coffee and bean soup. I have a thousand other memories. I often think about those friends then and wonder where they are today.
    Reply

22. **barry young | April 17, 2010 at 1:53 pm Edit**
    i arrived in crete march 13 1970 w my friend dave. we left heraklion for the caves of matala two weeks later. there we discovered a very international, very colorful community living in the ‘caves’ or carved crypts on the cliff. the scariest dude was wild-haire, wild-eyed, bigger than life cary. he was a heroin addict off heroin and somewhat cranky., unpredictable- scary even. i saw him dive thru the window of the blue dolphin restaurant when a propane stove exploded. hair-trigger.
    anywayish… in the eves we all gathered in the largest cave called the ‘hilton’. i improvised nightly on the guitar offering wacked over lyrix to non english speaking hippies- it became a ritual. one night i was performing and looked to my right. there she was. joni mitchell. really. i passed the guitar over to her but a hilton head case regular thought i was passing it to him. he accepted the guitar and sang dreadful banshee howls for about half an hour before she finally got to her. then? she killed us all with celestial performance. most of the euro-heads didn’t know who she was. but they found out in a hurry and a half.
    she started pairing up with cary and after a week told me she was going back to heraklion in her rented vw van. w cary. would i like to

come along? yes. i did would had to. i was 18, she was 25 but i was in adoration and a trance. love didn't begin to describe it y'all. worship it was and then some.
cary wasn't happy but off we went, travelling all over crete for three days. cary was in a foul and toxic mood. needless to say joni wasn't seeking sweetness and light at the time. i think this was post graham nash and that might explain her prediliction. could i judge?
when we got to heraklion cary disappeared [scoring?] i went up on the roof of the hostel with joni. she showed me all of her open tunings and wrote them down for me. then? she played for me. 3 or 4 songs. the circle game is the one i'm sure of. that i specifically remember, i was under a spell. when she sang she was absolutely reliving the events that motivated the song. tears and trembling. this was art, poetry and love manifest. this brought the 60's to an end at least for me. the end of innocence.
sadly, cary returned. i left for india w a profound sense of loss and longing. i wanted to be her footman. knight. dachsund (as it were) when i came back to the U.S. a year or two later, after HUGE and momentous misadventure, turning points, close calls, (and regrets, sigh), someone gave me her album 'blue' with the song 'cary' on it. and i was very relieved because i thought i had imagined or hallucinated the 'joni incident'dream'.
as a film director i have travelled the world and worked with amazing people and done more adventurous and remarkable things than i can rememeber. but? joni was a touchstone to my existence.
postscript i ran into her at a restaurant in brentwood when i was w my wife and toddler sons. what? 25 tears kaier? m. my wife said go say hi to her, but i hate bothering celebs when they're trying to enjoy a moment in the public semi-world. i stayed at my table. stupid me. joni is was and always will be an open and truly heart-led angel who would enjoy a reminiscence, a walk thru the door into what was.
here's another clue for you all- risk everything all the time and don't say yo. isn't that what her songs are all about?
peace and love forever

Reply

- **Jon | July 5, 2010 at 7:39 am Edit**
  Barry, I was there in the Hilton the night you passed the guitar to Joni. She had been in Matala for several days before that night, playing songs, composing tunes, working on lyrics and jamming with some of us, perhaps with you as well. One of the more memorable moments i spent with her was in the grove of trees near the chapel, 4 of us in total including Joni. I played bongos someone had left behind and another hand drum, and as I recall it, Joni was working out songs that later appeared on "Blue", and sang a number of songs from earlier albums such as "Big Yellow Taxi". It was a remarkable moment, over altogether too quickly, and though it seems like only a few

weeks ago, it's now been 40 years since we were there. One of the people I traveled with was named "Willie" and was the son of a Reader's Digest editor…do you remember him? I recall Carey very well. It would be interesting to revist some of those memories sometime…do you have any photos from then? Please get in touch, or respond in these pages. I look forward to hearing more stories from Matala ca 1970.

Reply

- **barry young | July 7, 2010 at 4:30 am Edit**
  amazing
  there are many worlds compromising our lives. because they have passed into the "was" don't mean that they aren't still here
  didn't u wear a serape all the time?
  where are you now?
  whatever happened to Coca Cola Yoga Joe?
  where are the snows of yesteryear?
  where did i go so wrong to have things turn out so right?
  - **William Bayers | September 9, 2020 at 1:07 am Edit**
    Sounds like Zorba
    Reply

23. **barry young | April 17, 2010 at 1:59 pm Edit**
    roger ,
    i remember you, i think. vw van? from palo alto? no?
    Reply
24. **Rick chelew | July 7, 2010 at 7:24 pm Edit**
    Barry,
    I remember you and Dave. There were two Daves –was he the tall red-haired guy from Pacifica who played flute and people mistook for Ian Anderson? I came over on the ferry with the infamous Cary as my berthmate, but went east from Iraklion to Agios Nicholas before heading to Matala. I'm thinking we met in Athens and took the same ferry over, arrived before dawn and slept on benches in the park??
    I have an old journal and I"ll check to refresh my memory.
    Rick
    Reply
    - **barry young | July 9, 2010 at 8:08 am Edit**
      un.
      be.
      lieve.
      able.
      yes yes and yes.
      wow. and i pride myself on longterm memory.
      dave carpenter, my friend/travelmate from san francisco/san mateo and tall dave from i think daly city. we met latter on train in amsterdam. he was travelling w a dutch kid nino & they both went to matala where we hooked up again.

dave and i tried to sleep on deck huddled and freezing behind big ‘crate’. around three a.m. deckhands kicked us awake and made us move. they then tipped crate and out slid a shrouded body. splash. into agaean. discount burial at sea
you and i drank turkish coffee in the stinking passenger compartment. u were anti-caffeine and said, “oh well. wake up and die” and then downed that little cup of motor boat fuel.
march 13, 1970. right?
“i was so much older then. i’m younger than that now”
Reply

25. **Rick chelew | July 10, 2010 at 4:52 am Edit**
Yes, yes. So sweet to hear those pieces coming back through your memory. I had forgotten the coffee, but reading your recollection I could taste it all. Tall Dave from Pacifica I nicknamed “upstairs” and there was “David”, an artist from San Diego. I had met Tall Dave in Athens .
I took the ferry to Crete on Mar 11. Went to Alia, in Northeast Crete near Agios Nicholas first, having met flutist Jacob Samuel from Malibu. We were enjoying playing music together, and they insisted that Matala would just be a hippie scene and convinced me to explore the more peaceful side of Crete first. I must have arrived in Matala around March 21. Left Crete for Istambul shortly after Easter, with Gerald and Roz from Palo Alto. Gary played guitar. We had met in Marakesh and had travelled through The Sahara and across North Africa together.
Had you gotten a ride with JM in a sportscar from Irakleon to Matala? she had written down her tunings for you?
I was carrying my Gibson J-50 guitar all those months through Europe and N. Africa. I still have the old girl. Still playing, professionally now.
Great stuff, Barry. Send me an email at rick@chelew.com.
Reply

26. **Bobby Armistead | July 17, 2010 at 2:53 pm Edit**
Dear Friends,
I am trying to locate one of the original hippies who lived in the caves at Matala during the 60’s. His name is Scotty, and I believe he is German. He has been described as, “the last hippie at Matala”. All I know is that he no longer resides in Matala because of poor health. He may be living in an old folk’s home, perhaps near Mires or Iraklion. Do any of you know where may be living? I would like to interview him before anything happens to him. I think the effect and the contributions the hippies made to Matala (and the world) are too significant to allow them to be lost when Scott passes away. Can anyone help? Thanks.
Your Friend,
Bobby
Reply

27. **Alan | August 6, 2010 at 3:00 pm Edit**
First went to Matala in 85 and even then did not want to stay for more than a day, although my memory is of a fairly empty beach.

Went back for a day beginning of August 2010 and found as I expected it is much more developed again. Shame as it is a naturally beautiful bay.
Someone on this thread mentioned people wearing teeth back in the 60's; I climbed up the hill a bit beyond the existing caves where the cliff has eroded, hoping to find a shard of old pottery as a memento, but straight away I found a skull and after brushing away a bit of sand the whole skeleton was there. I don't know if this was a Roman remains or if the site was used in later days as a burial site (perhaps it was Cary although I didn't find any red hair). Actually the skull was crumbly, so to old to be an old hippie left out in the sun too long.
It is strange that an important archaeological site is left to be wandered over with impunity but I guess the whole of crete is one big archeological site.
Query: Are the remains of buildings under the hills at the East side of the town Pre- Roman, Roman or later?

Reply

- **Rita Wilson | March 31, 2017 at 3:06 am Edit**
  Alan, when I was there in '69, the archaeologists were digging out the caves, making detailed drawings of each, including placements of bodies, types of antiquities, including beautiful iridescent bottles, and clay oil lamps. Then after days of digging, they would smash the bodies with shovels and destroy everything they discovered. They cited the inability to store all their finds and that Greece already had plenty of antiquities!
  Reply
- **amphibious | September 9, 2020 at 5:47 am Edit**
  The origins of the caves is an oddly neglected study – most (of very few & scanty) reports suggest preRoman but it is strange that proper study has never occurred.
  When I dug out my original cave, with help from Stephen, we could not believe what we fund – at least half a dozen skeletons & stunningly crafted grave goods, blue Phoenician glass vases, baked clay oil lamps and other remnants long rotted which suggested cloth or natural hair.
  As Rita notes below, when the authorities came they smashed everything, human remains & objects to powder.
  The last thing the military junta wanted was international attention from respectable types.
  Before they came and a couple of other people took what we could carry away for safety.
  I buried my cache beneath a huge round boulder on the highest non cave level when the narrow ledge is little more than a track over the ridge, leading eventually to Phaistos.
  When I went back in 1973 the boulder was gone! Hope that I hadn't loosened its foundations when burying my lamps as I would have done serious damage had it rolled down onto the lower areas.
  Reply

28. **Bob | August 8, 2010 at 9:31 pm Edit**
    Hi Marni,
    Carey (Mr. Raditz), was in a fraternity with me at UNC 1964-68. He was a wild man then. One of his classic moves came on a Sunday morning when he broke into the “chapter room”, got the “mystic robes”, and with those and a wicked witch of the west hat, climbed into the tree on the edge of the yard next to the neighboring Baptist church and serenaded those good Baptists with a repetitive rendition of “Onward Christian Soldiers” – played on a kazoo as they came to services. He was also quite destructive to the property then, most likely derived out of his upbringing. I remember seeing him sitting with his parents in the back yard, splitting a half gallon of bloody Marys on a Sunday morning and all laughing uproariously. He was larger than life and a bit scary at times, including blowing a hole in the wall of one of his friend’s room with a shotgun – while the friend was in the room. Fast forward 25 years to when some of our group began to get together on a regular basis. Carey had emerged a very interesting man, married with kids and working for an NGO doing financial consulting in third world countries or something like that. He seems a deeply thoughtful and comfortable with himself man who has lived (survived) a life far richer but more precarious than most of us have – or at least those of us in the fraternity whose duty it was to keep the overall GPA respectable.
    Reply
    - **Bob | August 31, 2010 at 4:15 am Edit**
      To the last Bob:
      In a moment of recollection inspired by hearing a set of 3 Joni Mitchell songs on WRFG, I recalled that a friend of mine in Atlanta (Bob Peterson, now deceased) said that he either knew Carey or was in a fraternity at UNC-CH with the Carey (of Joni Mitchell’s song). I believe that Bob was in Delta Upsilon and that Randall Bramlett was also a fraternity brother…….Thanks for enabling me to confirm Carey’s identity……..Bob
      Reply
29. **stefano frollano | September 1, 2010 at 3:19 am Edit**
    Hi everybody just got tonight from Crete…been there in Matala too where I met the Mermaid Cafè original owner…and I talked with some people who lives there from many many years…a sort of a trip..I’m a musician and a writer…and fan of Joni and I wanted to know some things about her period here…I found out an old photo with the original painting of Mermaid..a rarities coming from a gentle woman of the village… more soon…ciao…
    Reply
    - **Stelios Xagiorarakis | September 14, 2010 at 11:41 pm Edit**
      Hi Stefano,
      I don’t think that you met the original owner in Crete, as I happen to be that person. I started the Mermaid Cafe in the late 60’s, Carey worked in my cafe, and Joni sang there in the

evenings. Joni said before she left Matala that she wanted to write a song about the Mermaid Cafe which she did and titled it Carey.
IF you should have any questions, please get in touch.
Take care,
STelios Xagorarakis
Reply

- **kalimera | April 15, 2013 at 11:55 pm Edit**
  Hi Stelios, were you the stelios that I knew in Matala in 1967 whose sister was a hair dresser in tymbaki or nearby?
  Regards Kalimera

30. **Stelios Xagiorarakis | September 14, 2010 at 2:38 am Edit**
    Hi everyone,
    This is Stelios, the original owner of the Mermaid Cafe living in California with wife and 2 kids. I am thinking of writing a book about my years in Matala and all of the happenings with Joni Mitchell and Carey.
    IF you would like to correspond with me, please send me an email.
    Thank you,
    Yasoo,
    Stelios Of the Mermaid Cafe
    Reply

    - **Nigel | October 14, 2010 at 5:16 pm Edit**
      Stelios-were you in the no1 cave when Joni sang “The one puff blues”?My memory is somewhat distorted due to the dustbin sized pipe that was passed around and I cannot remember any of the words!
      We did speak about purchasing Gavdos,you and I,impossible at the time for a non Greek but I had been left a little money by my grandmother.Nothing came of it but a boat trip to Gavdos came to a halt-when far out in the bay the fisherman pointed out the wreck of a second world war ‘plane deep down under the boat festooned with nets.Impossible to tell the nationality of the wreckage.
      Nigel.
      Reply

    - **Rocky Schmit | May 27, 2011 at 6:47 pm Edit**
      Stelios… Wonderful to see that you live and breathe… Was a regular for late salad & omelette breakfast at your Mermaid but don’t remember ever paying… Was it cuz you felt sorry for zombied Vietnam vets or because I shared a cave with your apple-pie maker from London or because I was beaten all shades of blue trying to stop the police from arresting you and your little sister when they sledge-hammered down the addition to your kitchen???
      Hope you succeed in writing your book… It will help a lot of us put some of the prescious fragments together… Like they say: If you can remember those crazy sixties, you really weren’t there! Maybe it was even into 1970…?
      Do recall some faces and a succession of caves till we ended up

in one where we could dive straight down into the bay and swim across to the Mermaid….
Remember also the London pie-maker and I and some other making a long pilgrimmage overland and ferry boat to Kimon Friar and American and British embassies to intercede for your release. The embassies mumbled some jumbo about not interfering in Greek internal affairs, don't know if they actually did anything—but Kimon interrupted his sacred morning writing time to receive us and went into some kind of action. Maybe it helped???
Don't think it helped when I barked out:" Down with Popadoupolous!" and cleared the crowded dance floor on the ferry… But think that happened later as we were leaving Crete for good.
Think I probably never apologized for a spontaneous grief party that materialized after you were hauled away… Got flung into the burning stove in what was left of your kitchen and got fried for my sins… Spent some weeks on my belly in the cave recuperating… The folk-singer in a neighboring cave had a big tube of zinc oxide from her cave mate's bad experience with an oven in the other Matala cafe´. Bless them healing hands. It was the only medicine around… and music!
Hoping that you have continued to prosper and see by these pages that you are well and continue to help those less fortunate… Bless you…Peace… Raki Nomad
Ps. We are living in Sweden, kids, grandkids… Seekers have found! Rocky Schmit +46 073 403 9733
Reply

- **Dora Mendzil | May 1, 2012 at 5:16 pm Edit**
  Hi Rocky, this is the 'London' applepie-maker calling. What fun we had trying to get justice from the Cretan hierarchy. I remember carrying plates of food along the streets of Mires whilst Stelios was in jail – long before the days of takeaways (well perhaps anywhere outside America). I did get some strange looks and felt a bit silly. Prisoners were not even fed by their gaolers in Crete!
  The apple pies at The Mermaid probably began as a casual request or suggestion. I had to write home to my mother (in the Isle of Man, not London) for a shortcrust pastry recipe! We began by baking a trayful in the cafe oven and soon each slice would be sold before it was baked. Then we made much larger ones and had to ask the lady at the local bakery to bake them, such was the demand. Then she stole our idea!
  I took off east eventually, had to say goodbye to some wonderful people and that was the end of my year in Crete – only meant to stay a week when I arrived in April 1969 – but I wouldn't go back. How dare they cut down that huge tree on the Mermaid patio? I have some photos taken near it with the original Mermaid figure just visible in the

background. They were magic days indeed and I cherish the memories.

- **lynn | March 3, 2013 at 7:09 am Edit**
  Hi Stelios
  Do you remember the Canadians who were living in the caves in Matala in 1966? There were 8 of us and we spent many a night at the Mermaid eating and drinking retsina. There was also an American guy called Mike and a German called Hans there at the time.
  Reply
- **John | September 20, 2020 at 12:51 am Edit**
  Hi Stelios
  I am actually in Matala at the moment for a few days. I am trying to find where the Mermaid Cafe was? Matala has changed a lot based on the old photos I have seen, lots of souvenir shops, restaurants, hotels.
  I wish I was old enough to have been here back in the 60s.
  Can you help me find the Mermaid? Was it on the sea front or back where the square is?
  Thanks for any help.
  John
  Reply
  - **Lynn | September 20, 2020 at 3:09 am Edit**
    Was there in 1966 – Mermaid Cafe was near the square if I recall
  - **Stefano Frollano | September 23, 2020 at 10:24 pm Edit**
    I have somewhere a photo from the Mermaid Cafe…I ve been there ..in Matala back in 2010 and one of the things I did it was ask to the people if they had memories of Mermaid Cafè and Joni Mitchell..I need to find the stuff and I hope to send you all here..ciao..Stefano
  - **Rita | September 20, 2020 at 4:50 am Edit**
    John……I haven't been to Crete for 50 years,
    but the Mermaid was in the last building on the beach, closest to the caves. I'm sure Matala has undergone many changes since….good luck in your search!
  - **amphibious | September 20, 2020 at 11:20 am Edit**
    It is interesting to see how Lynn & Rita remember the layout in 66-69 – both differently and I now must add a third orientation.
    May I firstly, on a different criterion, ask that the true compass points, often miswritten as North/South, be recognised.
    The village & beach faced virtually DUE WEST. (Just remember how we would watch the sunsets move back & forth as the Solstice approached & departed.)
    Therefore the caves were on the **NORTH** side of the village and Red Beach (and its ancillaries) were South.

My first visit, Sept 67, found that closest to the caves was DELFINIS, run by young Manoli whom I think was not local, (possibly from the mainland) with the blue dolphin sign.
There was a pergola about 50mts from Delfinis closer to the caves then but when I came back in Spet 68 it had been burned in some turf dispute.
Only the blacked stumps remained, sticking out of the beach to trip many an unwary reveller late at night stumbling cavewards with a skinful or raki or ouzo.
.that had been burnt.
The Mermaid was towards the southern end of the waterfront, another cafe that DID NOT have a name in 68 but was possibly owned, though certainly run, by Mama. Potato omelettes were her speciality – she didn't open the 'bakery' until 69.
By then her old cafe had been named MERMAID and was having a vast mural painted by an eccentric minor British aristocrat for board & wine. (He died in 2019, having come into his inheritance in the 80s and had a great obit in the Grauniad, hinting at Matalla without detail.)
It was the mural that gave it the name Mermaid.
In the early 70s, before settling down, I made a last pilgrimage but found little to recommend – not the current modern horrors but already heading that way.
Nonetheless it was still possible to find silted up caves en route to Red Beach – the best was above ground and huge, directly above the very sharp cleft down to the sea where we could dive and catch fish.
it was also the perfect halfway point for those of us who chose to swim to & from Red Beach so that we could not be followed by the wannabes.

31. **stefano frollano | October 17, 2010 at 5:18 pm Edit**
    Stelios , I don't know about this matter… Iknow only that I 've been crazy all over that afternoon in Matala to find out some tracks of the original owner of Mermaid and or try to find people that would remember the right location… at the end of this village trip.. I met a gentle woman, owner of a bookshop, Mrs. Kathianaki, that gave me a photocopy of the Mermaid Cafè…just after this, came out from the shop and go to the Kymata Restaurant…I met some guys and at the end I knew the daughter of the actual owner and all the people there, seeing my photocopy, started to remember the original doors of the Mermaid and the tree that they cut in the past…so the daughter of the owner told me that they were the original owners of the Restaurant. They left Crete in late 60 and they rented the cafè to another one (are you?)..then they come back in mid-70 and re-newed the local changing in the restaurant (they cut the tree)..
    Reply
32. **Spleef | October 18, 2010 at 3:46 am Edit**
    You can't say Matala without say "ah" 3 times.

I was there in ’88. It was April and I had been in Mykanos with a friend for a week. The weather was not good. When it was time for her to go home she had gotten ill. We met a guy on the ferry back to Piraeus. He told me that if I wanted good weather, then when I leave Athens, I should take the ferry to Crete. And when I get to Crete, I should take the bus to Matala. And when I get to Matala, I should go to Georgios Bar because he was playing great music.
So, I dropped my friend off in Athens, jumped on the first ferry to Crete (with some goats bleating in the night), found the bus to Matala, and after 2 hours of twisting and turning through Crete, I arrived at Matala. Found a room at the Bamboo Sands and made my way to Georgios. That evening, still at the bar, I began chatting with a nice young girl. And 22 years later, that nice young girl is my old lady. Married for 15 years. Thanks for the travel tips Mike!!
Reply

33. **edwin jackson | December 5, 2010 at 2:23 pm Edit**
I arrived at Matala in the spring of 1969 and immediately ran out of money. Coming at the tender age of 19 straight from a closed and opressive society that was South Africa at the time, Matala turned out to be a major turning point in my life–truly my first enrolement in the University of Life.
With my crazy Dutch friend Theo we found what I think was the last available cave near the top situated off another larger one. Cleaning it out we came across a human skull–Roman soldier? Not knowing what to do with it (there might have been a rucus) I hung it on the cave window overlooking the bay and named him Charlie. The ritual each sunrise and sunset was to sit at the window with Charlie and share time and my last Texan cigarretes with him.
With no money we made a few attempts to leave but were prevented from doing so by the kindness of so many people who would offer food. Anyone remember the South African girls Debbie and Jenny? The Australian artist, Chester, who had nothing but a blanket and who fed us and threw a big party at the Mermaid with proceeds from his sales?
I have incorporated our 3 weeks there in a book that I am writing as the start of an incredible journey of life that is still ongoing.
Cheers for now, Edwin
Reply

34. **Don Carlson | February 2, 2011 at 12:10 am Edit**
Hi to anyone who was in Matala in March/April 1973.I stayed there in a large cave between Matala and Red Beach over looking Matala along with about six other people.Played in the roman baths toward Red Beach,hung out at the Marmaid Cafe ate fresh baked goods from Mamas bakery and she even embroidered a rose on my cut off jean shirt.Swam, and it was one of the best times of my life at the age of 20 years.Now a young 58 year old-Counsellor and Teacher in North Vancouver,BC,Canada,Matala will always be dear to my heart.One person I would like to hear from is Mary Fraser a 17-18 year old Scottish Girl from Edinburgh Scotland who I also worked on a watermelon farm for day for a big $3.00 but learnt

how rugged those older Greek women were in a big hurry.Mary if you are out there I guess you are about 55-56 ish years now, and I had left Greece and gone overland to India over a six month period.You had stayed on in Athens to help a Greek family and teach their children English in about April 1973 give or take a bit.Hope you are well.Sincerely,Don Carlson(geodon@telus.net).
Reply

- **vivienne | May 20, 2011 at 9:40 am Edit**
  Hi Don
  I was in Matala from February 1974 to June of that year. Were you still there or had you already left? I remember two Canadian guys, Gordon (I think?) and Gerry. We lived in a cave between Matala and Red Beach.
  Vivienne
  Reply

35. **mara | April 2, 2011 at 7:48 am Edit**
    I was there in 1968 and lived in the big front cave with twogirls from London, Linda and Georgie. I remebr someof the names, Jean Claude, Detloff, Fugi whose mother was Japanes and his father from Aphganistan or the other way round and his frind Klaus? from Norway.
    Reply
36. **Don Carlson | May 22, 2011 at 6:31 am Edit**
    Hi Vivienne,Sorry we missed one another by a year,I was in matala at the same time as you in 1973.I stayed in the large clam shaped cave on the east side of Matala(left side looking out on the Med.)and directly down on Matala Beach. I also recall other caves on the way to Red Beach alittle more hidden, and hung out at Red Beach and some roman type baths naturally carved out by the ocean closer to the beach on the way to Red Beach.Great time at the age of 20 years then went onto India via Istanbul.
    Reply

    - **vivienne | May 22, 2011 at 6:26 pm Edit**
      Yes I remember your cave – used to pass it on the way up to the one I shared with Gerry. Sorry we missed by a year. Gerry and I left in June and headed up to Germany. We'd plans to go on to Amsterdam but I had to get back to the UK and Gerry and I parted. Am now a psychologist practicing privately in Paris France. Not sure I'd be where I am today without those times in Matala.
      Reply

      - **Don Carlson | May 25, 2011 at 5:54 am Edit**
        Hi Vivienne,
        I am a counsellor/teacher in North Vancouver at a high school.Interestiing how those youthfull events(Matala&India)have served me well in life and to this day probably the best thing for me as a 20 year old who really never liked school. Great to see your success.Don

37. **Stefano Frollano | May 22, 2011 at 5:09 pm Edit**

..just to remember to the Matala visitors and Joni fans…she' stayed in Matala between March and April 1970..

cheers

Stef

Reply

38. **Denis | June 2, 2011 at 9:05 pm Edit**

    Hello everybody,

    today a friend of me send an email to look on this blog.

    And I´am very surprised!

    The reason is that me and my girlfriend stay many times in Matala, but "unfortunately" only since 1998, ok, i was born 66. 😉

    Since many years I have a homepage and a blog about matala, and I allways try to find some informations.

    Do you now that we make a big festival in Matala from 11.-13. June ?

    Now Iam still in germany, but on Sunday I start to got to crete by car for 5 weeks.

    If you want to have any information, have a look on my blog.

    Many greetings

    Denis

    Reply

39. **Denis | June 15, 2011 at 11:05 am Edit**

    As I see you could not read the adress of my homepage.

    So here it is:

http://www.matala-kreta.eu

1. Many greetings from Crete

   Denis

   Reply

2. **Marilyn | June 26, 2011 at 9:48 pm Edit**

   how come when most of you guys were there late sixties and early seventies that you didnt get hassled by the military police?The junta had been in power by then for a few years sponsored by the CIA which a lot of people still dont know about!Check your history books!

   Reply

   - **`don`carlson | July 21, 2011 at 11:00 pm Edit**

     Hi Marilyn,When I was there in 1973 `march/April only once did a group of about 6-8 uniformed men come to get us off or out of the caves.News travelled quickly at that time and most of us living in the caves and seeing the uniformed men arrive headed deeper inland while others blended in with the people on the beach.Only once in the couple of weeks I was there did they arrive in Matala and even then it did not appear to be a major event despite as you say the junta were powerful.Whether they were the junta or the local police I do not know for sure as a group of us just moved further inland until they departed.Maybe this is of some help.Cheers Don

     Reply

- **amphibious | March 13, 2017 at 10:06 am Edit**
  I was there each Winter from 67-70, waiting for the snow in the passes in Anatolia to clear so that I could be off to India.
  The military junta was a wholly owned subsidiary of the US (they had a huge USAF base outside Heraklion and once a couple of their jets buzzed us below the upper level) to fight off the dire threat of kommunism.
  Kapitalism was just hunky-dory and that's what the influx of young amerikans (esp after that damned Life article in 68) represented who replaced the old gammler euro beats who lived on the smell of an oily rag.
  US dollars, cold,hard cash so they were tolertated and supported the otherwise depressed southern region.
  If anyone wants their heart broken, google Matalla now and see what it has become – assuming that you can distinguish the place from a thousand other lavish euroid waterholes & clipjoints.
  As our new Orange OgreLord would tweet, "SAD!".
  Reply

3. **Bridget | August 4, 2011 at 5:40 pm Edit**
   Having been sent the video of Matala accompanied by Joni's magic song 'Carey',I've looked into links and come across all your amazing info-thanks to all have shared their great memories.
   Have never been to Matala but fell in love with and have lived in Greece since 1984,and will hopefully visit this place which is obviously has touched your hearts too.
   Thanks again for enabling my wonderful 'journey'. May you all re-live Matala peace forever,either there or wherever you are.
   Reply

4. **Colin Salter | August 12, 2011 at 9:14 pm Edit**
   What an amazing picture all these comments build up of those times! I wasn't there, five years too young, but yes, someone should write a book. Stelios?! So after all that, where is Carey now? As far as I can tell, after Matal he went to Nepal, then briefly back to NY where he shared a room with songwriter Eric Anderson, then off to Senegal with the Aid program, and by 1999 was living in California. Does this sound right? And now? Is he still alive?
   Colin Salter
   Reply

5. **Suzie | August 17, 2011 at 7:59 am Edit**
   Hello Matala Lovers! I've had a wonderful evening reading your memories of that magical place. I was there in the fall of 1969…… can't imagine why, but do not remember talk of Joni Mitchell!! in fact, did not know about her and Carey untill reading a friend's blog. Matala was a real stepping off place for me….had arrived in Europe 2 weeks earlier. But it was in Matala that our planned 3 month European holiday changed into a fantastic journey of discovery on all levels…living for the moment, without a plan or even a desire to ever return…..spent the rest of the winter in Sitia, Crete….then on to Istanbul, and overland to India and Nepal……

and to a lifestyle that formed the person I was to become. But leaving Create was NOT easy and I've always wanted to return. Love your poem, Rocky! I remember 2 boys from Whales, and a Canadian? Don, who played the guitar….the first time I'd heard, and loved so much, the Abbey Road songs. I will never know how we made it up to our caves after all that good wine. and to this day I have never seen stars so big and bright as though you could touch them, or sunsets so spectacular. and who could forget the Shit Cave?!! whew…..what memories.

Reply

- **amphibious | March 13, 2017 at 10:12 am Edit**
  Suzie – due to overpopulation, Shit Cave was stacked with dry brush, thyme & sage and set ablaze to attempt to fumigate & sterilise.
  It burned overnight and was still too hot to enter two days later but then was rechristened the Hilton.
  Reply
- **amphibious | March 13, 2017 at 10:59 am Edit**
  Suzie – Old Age Moment – it just occurred to me that perhaps, by ShitCave, you meant the seamost, heavily eroded cave where nimbleness was essential when the waves crashed in to cleanse it.
  I thought that I was the only person crazy enough to use it.
  Reply
- **Stephan Raubenheimer | February 2, 2018 at 5:43 pm Edit**
  Hi Suzie, I was in Matala from late December 1968 with my buddy Alex Calder(both of us from Cape Town), with 2 girlfriends Martha & Julia Costello. We lived in (& baptised) the Matala Hilton (which I bought for $5 – bed included) Cleaned it out & furnished it with a kerosene kitchen stove, covered the entire floor with a 6 inch layer of pebbles, then softened the floor with Indian cotton prints and the alcoves with travel posters. Cleaned & burned out the shit cave and dug a long drop about 50 feet back behind the trees, & built a private latrine for the ladies. I built an entrance swingdoor & kitchen table for the Hilton and made a window with opaque plastic sheeting to keep the weather out. The Hilton verandah was wonderful for watching the sunset, with friends & a shot of Raki 😄
  We had communal dinners where most of the time people contributed something for a large salad & paella-like spaghetti base and mixed seafood.
  There was no 'hedonism' or debauchery of any sort until around May when almost overnight hundreds of freaks who had read Life Mag appeared and slept on the beach below. Paradise lost. People started behaving badly. The Antiquities Police arrived, Martha got hepatitis & we left before the trouble started. She moved into the Contagious Diseases hospital in Iraklion (where I stayed too) till she got well.

Joni Mitchell was not there during that time (late Winter & Spring of ’69)
One night the roof of a cave to the right & below the Hilton collapsed on to a Canadian couple – breaking her pelvis.
Anyone remember that?
Reply

- **Rita Wilson | February 3, 2018 at 4:45 am Edit**
  I came shortly after the cave collapse and heard the sad news, I think I remember she had to be air-lifted out and flown home. I remember the night there was a nude party at the Hilton……a few of the men wore guitars, and I wore my regular clothes…..everyone else was wearing their birthday suits…….it was still a good time and fun for all. I remember a day collecting periwinkles from the rocks and giving them to a someone that created a delicious spaghetti sauce, we ate like kings that night. Lots of good memories, of feeling safe, and free, and cared for.
- **amphibious | May 13, 2018 at 9:56 am Edit**
  It’s been a while since this interchange began – I wonder how the 68/69 denizens are doing.
  Funny that most of us will now be well *into* our 70s!
  What did Keef say…”if I’d known I’d live so long I would have taken better care of my body!”
  Who knew?
  Like most oldies, I’m feeling the encroaching years & decades and have to decided to visit as many of my beloved places of old as possible, ie not shattered by war, dictatorship or religious zealots.
  That rules out one of the most beautiful place on Earth, Bamyan and the placid blue waters of high Band-e-Amir lakes.
  And Swat. And Kashmir. And Kulu and …. you get the idea, not many left.
  Not a good time to be young, me thinks.
  I shall make a pilgrimage to Kreta late 2018 and will, must perforce, at least see Matalla.
  If only to confirm my worst fears.
  If there are any others from that wonderful Winter who can make the trip perhaps we could co-ordinate – I am lucky to be fairly flush with funds so do not let penury put you off.
  I guess it is the realisation that it is 50 years since that dire year, the Evetenment, the Kennedy/King assassinations, the “secret” Xmas bombing of Hanoi and the crushing of Prague, ad nauseam that make me feel so nostalgic.
  O Tempora, O Mores.
  - **Liam | May 13, 2018 at 11:56 am Edit**
    Wow

6. **Bob | August 20, 2011 at 11:35 pm Edit**
   Carey is alive and well and living in Virginia. I saw him this past May in Beaufort, NC at a college reunion. Believe it or not he is a

certified financial planner who has spent much of his career working for non profits helping African enterprises organize financially (I think). In his college days he was an absolute animal house wild man, and now he is a most interesting and thoughtful man.

Reply

7. **Stelios Xagiorarakis | August 21, 2011 at 7:15 pm Edit**
   Hi Bob,
   I would like to get in contact with Carey after all of these years. I am so glad to hear that he is doing so well. Thank you,
   Stelios Xagorarakis (owner of the Mermaid Cafe)
   My tel. number is 949 646-8666 for home
   949 722-8643 for business
   I currently sell water well drills to mainly Africa. Also, I am one of the founders of Mother's Market and Kitchen (7 health food stores) located in Orange County, California.

   Reply

8. **Colin | August 21, 2011 at 11:33 pm Edit**
   Thanks, Bob – glad to hear Carey has survived the wild days, I hope without regret! Sounds like he's a good man to know.

   Reply

9. **Rose | August 27, 2011 at 5:06 pm Edit**
   Amazing to read all these memories of Matala – I was there in the summer of 1969 – I then went on to Istanbul and back to England for a short time, before going back to Matala for the winter of 1969-70. I remember Christmas Day on the beach .. I think I left sometime in January, maybe early February – I remember some lovely Canadians, including Susie who played guitar and sang and I shared a cave that winter with an American, Susan.
   Does anyone remember Italian Renee?-his cave was the place to go during that summer of 1969 – loads of people used to cram in there and wait for the chillum to come round, guitars and drums always playing – Renee's English wasn't great but his key phrase was 'smoke it'. I would love to hear from anyone who remembers him and those days. He was still there when I left in early 1970.
   Matala was a magical time in my life, never forgotten!

   Reply

10. **Margaret | November 12, 2011 at 7:14 am Edit**
    My sister Bonnie and I lived in the Matala caves in winter of 1969, leaving just before Joni Mitchell arrived in March 1970. At dawn on December 11th, my 19th birthday, Cary Raditz posted himself at my cave opening with a battery operated record player playing "Here Comes The Sun." I had risen early and hiked to the peak of a nearby hill to watch the sunrise so I wasn't there!
    I remember the sounds of a pig being slaughtered in town, the inbred cats that played crazily along the beach in front of the cafe, the graceful deer-like dogs that followed me on my hikes one was called "Lyca"), the communal dinners in a huge cave (I have a great picture), tar balls that washed up on the beach that made our bare feet sticky, the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks and

deeply echoing inside the caves, going to the bathroom in the designated gross toilet area in the bushes, sage burning for days to clean out the caves, chisms made from bones found in the caves used for smoking hash and tobacco, rice pudding, a mouse running out of my pant leg when I dressed, hearing that there were small mice tunnels connecting the caves, rumors that Jean Claude burned his girlfriend's cat in a fire pit because she broke up with him, lots of music and sun and magic!
I see Cary Raditz is on LinkedIn if anyone is looking for him:-)
Cary and I later ran into each other in Mill Valley, California which is my hometown. He and I lived together there, in North Carolina (balancing his cane on his nose as he walked down the streets of Chapel Hill, NC) and we went to Europe together . Joni Mitchell's song(s) aptly describe Cary. He was quite the showman! Margaret Hansen
Reply

- **Stelios Xagorarakis | January 18, 2012 at 2:13 am Edit**
  Hi Margaret,
  I would like to know more of your stories too.
  Thank you,
  Stelios
  Reply
  - **Dora Mendzil | April 30, 2012 at 10:22 pm Edit**
    Hello Stelios,
    Good to hear that things have turned out so well for you. I remember many happy days at the Mermaid and lots of hard work too! How are your sisters? Poppy was in France I believe. Where is Alexandra? I hope she's well. And Manoli Psaros was so lovable. Ah what happy days! I dare not go back. It tempts me but I know I'd regret it. Leave those great memories as they are. Regards to you and your family, from Dora.
  - **Stelios Xagorarakis | May 1, 2012 at 7:05 pm Edit**
    HI Dora and family,
    Happy May Day. It has been almost 43 years since we met. Alexandra lives in Paris and has 3 children and Penelope has 4 chilldren and lives in Athens and has a fashion shop. One of Penelope's daughters lives in London and one of Alexandra's sons works in London at a university. Alexandra talks about you many times and would love to see you again. She lives in the heart of Paris on the left bank and has lived there since 1972 and has an art gallery. We will be there in September for 3 or 4 days to visit. Then we will fly from Paris to Crete to visit more of our family. Manolis, my brother, lives in Iraklion and has 2 daughters and George lives in Athens and has 3 boys. Manolis, the fisherman, passed away in the 80's. Manolis was a very good man and I have some photographs of him. I was in California at that time. Also, my parents passed away not too long ago. I have some photographs of Manolis if you are

interested in having them. IF you would like to get in touch with Alexandra, I can send you her phone number.
A Greek T.V. station is preparing a documentary of the history of Matala and the Mermaid Cafe will be included.
Georgeanne and I are thinking of writing a book about the days of Matala. We have contacted Carey who lives on the East Coast in America. There are a lot of things to talk about but I would prefer to talk through emails. My email address is gxag@yahoo.com. Hope to hear from you soon.
The best to your family.
Take care,
Stelios and Georgeanne and family

- **Stephan Raubenheimer | February 1, 2018 at 3:05 pm Edit**
  Margaret,
  I remember the incident with the cat – my girlfriend Martha Costello (we lived in the Hilton From Jan to June 1969) named the cat “Crispy Ears”
  Reply
  - **Cary Raditz | May 14, 2018 at 12:27 am Edit**
    Hi Dora,
    Stelios and I had a 48 year reunion in Costa Mesa in April. He and Georgeanne hosted me with much hospitality as you can imagine. We spoke of you fondly. S tells me that you are back in the Isle of Mann. I would love to get in touch.
    Stelios’s nephew, Andrew, chauffeured S and me to LA, where we had my birthday dinner and reunion with Joni at her lovely house in Belair.
    By the way, J is fine and has made enormous strides in her recovery.
    Several things, Dora. S, J and I wish to locate Mark Wheeler, my partner in the Matala Leather Shop. On that subject I just posted a request on this site.
    We are also keen to identify who precisely celebrated in my cave that birthday night—19 April 1970–when J sang me my eponymous birthday song. Of course we remember you and Stelios—you brought pie & drink—Mark & Barbara, but the others, we cannot place. How’s your memory, Dora? Stelios has your contact info, he said. May I ask him for your coordinates? Cheers, Cary

11. **Marilyn | January 15, 2012 at 3:08 pm Edit**
    Saw on Facebook that Georgos the famous hippie fisherman from Matala died at the beginning of January!
    Reply
12.

http://backlinksmonster.co

1. **| January 20, 2012 at 4:33 am Edit**

I'm really inspired with your writing abilities as smartly as with the structure to your blog. Is that this a paid subject matter or did you customize it your self? Anyway stay up the nice quality writing, it is rare to see a great blog like this one today..

Reply

2. **Charlie Bing | January 21, 2012 at 12:15 am Edit**
   Whoa, what a find this is! I was in Matala in 1972 and my two clearest memories are of sitting in one of the caves, well stoned, listening to Bach on a classical guitar, by a Spanish guy who played left handed. And I remember how the plankton phosphoresced on my skin when I went swimming in the moonlight. And then, when I first arrived, and I was walking down the long road down to the village with some guy I met, and I had this deja-vu experience over an abandoned gas station that had, of all things, a DeSoto car sign hanging on a wall, and I told this guy about it before we got to it and it kind of weirded each of us out.

   Reply

3. **JN | February 21, 2012 at 10:35 am Edit**
   I have never been to Matala but after reading all of the stories and hearing a friend of mine talk about going to Greece and Crete with her ex-boyfriend I would like to go!
   I did find this site which is about Matala in the 60s and 70s:
   Reply

   - **Bobby Armistead | February 21, 2012 at 9:55 pm Edit**
     I travel to Crete every year for a three month vacation there. I usually stay on Crete during the months of July, August and September. And, while there, I aways make several trips to Matala. I have also documented my many trips to Crete on my website:

http://www.bobscretanadventure.blogspot.com

1.

   - This year I will return to Crete once again for the months of July, August and September. Perhaps we might run into each other. LOL.
     Bobby
     Reply

2. **Larz | March 22, 2012 at 1:16 pm Edit**
   My daughter found this thread and it is so interesting to read – brings back a lot of memories.
   I lived in the caves in March and April of 1970 and that's definitely when Joni Mitchell was there. I was living in Florence, Italy, hanging out with friends who were there on the FSU study programme. John McKenzie came over from Tallhassee to visit his girlfriend and we became friends. The students were in classes much of the time so John and I went down to Brindisi, got a ferry to Athens and another out to Heraklion. We took a bus across the island to Matala and i remember as we drove in, seeing the caves across the beach.

We had been there a few days when Joni Mitchell turned up, travelling with a Canadian friend. We saw her walking across the beach towards the caves and couldn't believe it. Everybody knew who she was but no one made a big deal about it. She was allowed to be just another person whose path had brought her to the caves. Her third album, Ladies of the Canyon, had just come out and it's the one that made her a major celebrity. I think she was trying to travel around Europe somewhat incognito as she adjusted to that. The fact that she was accepted as just another person in the caves may explain why she stayed there awhile.
There would be gatherings sometimes in one of the bigger caves when people would play music. Joni would sing sometimes but there were other musicians there too. John was a very good guitar player and they played together a bit. We were sitting in a cave with Joni one day and she was working out the lyrics to Carey on a dulcimer. She asked us what we thought about it. A year later, back in Tallahasee, I bought her album Blue and there it was.
Conditions in the caves were not very sanitary and John and I both got dysentary. We decided to go back to Florence, where we had acess to the FSU doctor. A few months later I was living in London and read an article over someone's shoulder on a crowded tube train which said Greek police had raided the caves and closed them. It was a sad moment. I had been there at a good moment and had been lucky that way.
Reply

- **Bobby Armistead | March 22, 2012 at 7:57 pm Edit**
  I visited the caves at Matala in 2009, 2010 and again in 2011. I have recent photos of the caves plus an interview with Scotty who lived in the caves on my website. When the hippies were forced out of the caves, most of the hippies left Matala…except Scotty. He remained in Matala until just a couple of years ago when he was placed in a Monestary near Iraklion for medical care after having suffered a stroke. You can view the photos and interview on my website at the following internet address:

http://www.bobscretanadventure.blogspot.com

1.
   - I hope you enjoy reading it. Best Wishes,
     Bobby A.
     Reply
2. **JH | June 11, 2012 at 11:43 am Edit**
   I went to Matala Sept/Oct 1974, not sure which month. Slept on the beach under one of the trees near the water, the caves were off limits, although I went into several shooting photos of the town and beach below. Also was where I got my best ever photograph, the sun low near the horizon, with the split flare image looked like the second coming. Not a super friendly place though, I ran out of $$ and tried to cash a travelers check, which was ignored by all. So had to hitch out to Iraklion, almost died of thirst along the way, but a sweet young Cretian girl in a home in the middle of nowhere gave

me some water, and saved my life. Soon a German couple in a Jag picked me up and took me all the way to Iraklion.

Reply

3. **sklug | June 25, 2012 at 11:56 pm Edit**

   Thank you so much for your stories. I was born in 1968, around the time many of you were heading to Matala, and I am completely fascinated by your experiences. I have been there several times, as a young girl with a backpack and no money, and later bringing my own daughter there. I leave again for Matala this Friday. Yes, it has been built up a bit over the years, but there is still something absolutely magical about the place. I find myself drawn to it during times of my life when I need healing, or I'm changing course and need to clear my head. Time stands still there, in a way that reminds me to appreciate and drink in every moment with joyful abandon. And my daughter feels it too. She begged me to go back again this year.

   Can I ask you all what drew you to Matala? It was obviously a very important time of your lives, pivotal it seems for many. And I think its more than just the nostalgia of youth.

   Reply

   - **Bobby | June 29, 2012 at 12:33 am Edit**

     I will be returning to Crete (and Matala) this Sunday for a three month holiday there. I'll be staying in the little seaside village of Amoudara, but will make several trips to Matala during my stay on Crete. There is something quite magical and mystical about Crete and Matala!

     Reply

4. **John Kilmartin | June 26, 2012 at 12:52 am Edit**

   "the wind is in from Africa ,..."

   Reply

5. **Lee Marks | August 23, 2012 at 11:42 pm Edit**

   Hello Everyone!

   I am so happy to have found this website celebrating Matala and Joni in the 60's and 70's. I'm 65 now but at that time as a young man in my late-teens and early-20's I was celebrating San Francisco, L.A., the Santa Cruz Mountains, Oregon, the lifestyles and communes that were flurorishing under the banner of the Woodstock Nation at the time. I didnt' make it to Matala until my very first trip to Europe in 1985. In fact I thought Matala was in Spain because the word does sound Spanish. When I first heard BLUE I was living in Oregon. It was 1972. That album, along with Van Morrison's ASTRAL WEEKS, are the two albums I most often enjoy and never travel without them. It wasn't until I actually went to Crete and bought a map of the island that I discovered that Matala was located in Greece, not in Spain. I immediately drove there to see what I could see. Unfortunately by then everything was changed, although I was told by the woman who served me lunch in an open-air cafe next to the beach that I was actually sitting on the site of the original Mermaid Cafe, which did feel like a wonderful synchronistic turn of events.

Having had my own experiences during those years that did parallel what happened in Matala I feel, after reading your comments, that we are kindred spirits. My personal journey of self-discovery started back then after reading Michener's THE DRIFTERS, Kesey's ELECTRIC KOOL-AID ACID TEST and Kerouac's ON THE ROAD. Even though I was already in my late-30's by the time I got there what drew me to Greece was my desire to discover my own inner Drifter. I had said many times that I would one day go live on a Greek Island, and in 1984 I realized that the "one day" I had always talked about was upon me, and I knew that if I didn't do it then I'd never do it, so I sold my business, put all my possessions in long-term storage and got on a plane. I ended up on Santorini where I stayed for 6 months. I then went around the world and ended up back in Santorini for another 6 months in 1987. I've been back to Greece close to a dozen times since then and will continue to do so as long as I am able. I've never looked back. The most important lesson I learned from travelling then, the one that still influences everything I do with my life is "Work To Live, Don't Live To Work".

Thank you for giving me this fine gift today.

And the love that loves to love the love that loves to love the love that loves.

Reply

6. **Bruce Martel | November 25, 2012 at 9:09 am Edit**

   I first came to Matala in January of 1975….we had travelled to London and then to Eastbourne to spend Christmas with a friend who I'd met working in northern Canada. We spent a week there and then our plan was to head to Nepal. In London we came across two Londoners Andy and Amos who were planning a trip to Greece via Magic Bus Tours…they convinced us to join them and said they eventually wanted to go to Crete and then on to Matala…"you know the place Joni Mitchell wrote the song Carey"….well as my friend and I were both Canadians we certainly knew who Joni Mitchell was and we knew songs from the Blue album…but we had never made the connection to Matala and Crete from that song. We became travelling buddies and we eventually ended up in Hraklion and then took a bus directly to Matala. The instant we arrived in the tiny village I was bewitched with it's mystic charm and tranquility. We could hear the ocean lapping up on the sand beaches and I was immediately drawn to the waters edge. I sat there for a good few hours just taking in the sun and the ocean. We only planned to stay a week or two and then continue on journey to Nepal….4 months later my friend Steve and I were still there. We couldn't seem to leave and were held hostage by Matala's mysticism. We spent many a night in the Mermaid Cafe' and the proprietor was trying to convince me to stay and help run the Cafe'….I was handy in the kitchen and it seemed his main dish was bean soup! I believe his name was Antonius Sfakakis however I'm delving into the depths of my memory banks here. He introduced us a local farmer (I think his name was Dmitri) who had a room to

rent at the farthest end of the village overlooking the Mediterranean….it had a light bulb and cold running water and an outhouse with running water…so we were living like Kings now. We spent many a night listening to Joni Mitchell's Blue album and drinking red wine in the Mermaid Cafe'….meeting travellers from all over the world…I still remember some names and faces….Mike a US Vietnam vet who smoked the pipe and always had a cryptic grin on his face….Martinne Zimmeck from Alsace a red-haired German girl…Susan ("Suzie Creamcheese") Von Marum from Holland…there was Mama who sold the best yogurt I've ever had and baked fresh bread daily…she taught me most of the Greek I know…those were names and people I remember to this day. There were many more and the names and faces may slowly come back to me over time..I'm going to be 61 years old in 3 weeks and its' funny how I stumbled across this site and started reading some of the posts. The memories started flooding back from the nooks and crannies of my memory. I even phoned my travelling friend Steve who I hadn't spoken to in 30 years and we talked, reminisced and laughed into the wee hours of the night. We plan to stay in touch and meet up to recollect over some red wine those days…so thank you all for posting on this site. Those 4 months in Matala (we never did make it to Nepal) forever altered my way of looking at life me and I left Matala reluctantly but knowing that my life would somehow be different from that point on.

Reply

7. **Bob Kimmick | January 20, 2013 at 3:17 am Edit**

   Memory is a funny thing and, for many people who visited Matala in the early 70s, I'm sure their memories are a bit fuzzy, having been altered at the time by hashish or some other influence. At least, that could be said of me. I remember the broad strokes well enough, but the exact chronolgy of events is elusive and many details have simply been washed away in the stream of time. Nevertheless, certain experiences haved remained painted more or less clearly in my mind. And over time, some have taken on epic status.

   I had been living in Matala for a couple of weeks and was there the day in April of 1970 when Joni Mitchell first pulled into the little fishing village with two friends in a VW bus. It was just about sunset and another person and I were sitting on the beach about 50 yards from the place the bus parked. We looked at the three of them getting out of the van then turned to each other and said somewhat disdainfully, "rich hippies". At that point neither of us recognized that it was Joni Mitchell. She was just a prettily dressed blond hippie girl accompanied by an affluent-looking dark-haired man and woman.

   They got a few things out of the bus and started walking directly toward us. When they got to where we were sitting, they said hello and asked if they could sit with us. We said "sure", and they plopped down. The 'blond girl' was carrying a big bag from which she pulled a huge bottle of wine wrapped in wicker and a hash

pipe. She opened the wine, passed it around, loaded the pipe and passed it. After the wine and the pipe had been passed around a few times, she asked us how a person could get into one of the 'caves' in the cliffs. I told her that you just kind of waited until someone moved out or room opened up, and she just nodded. As the sun sank lower, we talked about the place and various other things and were getting pretty ripped when she pulled a package of oreo cookies out of her bag. My friend and I laughed and asked her where she'd gotten them. I think she said her friends had a relative or friend at U.S. miliary base somewhere in Germay or Greece who had gotten the cookies for them from the base PX.

The conversation tapered off as the sunset intensified. When the sun had sunk just below the horizon, the blond girl pulled out two recorders (one ebony and one rosewood), tested each one for tone, chose the rosewood one, and started to play . The rest of us were immediately entranced. She played for about 20 minutes, and when she stopped I just mumbled how beautiful I thought it was and she thanked me. Then she put everything back in her bag, conferred with her friends, and said they were going the little taverna half way across the beach for dinner. They asked us if we wanted to join them, but we declined for lack of funds. After they had gotten up and walked away, my friend turned to me and asked in an awed tone if I knew who that was. I said no, and he said, "that was Joni Mithchell".

That evening was the beginning of Joni's brief but intense infatuation with "Carey" who was the manager/chef of Matala's (since removed) "Mermaid Cafe". The sounds of drunken laughter, singing and smashing plates lasted long into the evening. And, late the next morning, Joni emerged from Carey's little stone residence. My memory of Carey is this: He had apparently spent some time in Afganistan and he was often dressed as an Afgani with with loose pants, a long-bottomed shirt, a long cotton vest, and one of those kind of square-cut baggy cotton hats with rolled-up sides still commonly worn there. And, when he walked from place to place, he always carried this walking stick and affected a very exaggerated long stride, planting the walking stick prominently in front of him and propeliing himself forward. He certainly cut an impressive larger-than-life figure–certainly worthy of a song. But, to me and many others in the hippie community, he came off as an arrogant asshole.

Over the course of the week, Joni would venture up onto the cliffs where the hippies resided in "caves" that were actually Roman era burial vaults hewn into the cliffs. These vaults were various sizes–some holding two or three people and other more elaborate ones having a couple of large chambers and holding up to a dozen people. The elaborate ones had arched niches carved into the walls where a corpse had at one time been plastered in. The human remains had long before been removed from these chambers, and smaller persons were now using the niches as sleeping spaces.

The largest of the vaults was called the "Big Cave" and was occupied by a traveling commune called "The Magic Family" led by

a black-bearded charismatic named Andy. They were on ther way to India, but had been in Matala for a couple of months. The Magic Family was well-provisioned and nearly every evening, they would serve a communal vegetarian feast to anyone who showed up. The meal would be followed by lots of wine and hashish, drumming and and chanting, and “scratchy” rock ‘n roll until people found a partner for the evening and disappeared or they just couldn’t stay awake any longer and crashed where they sat.

One day I was in the Big Cave cutting vegetables for that evening’s feast and Joni appeared at the entrance with her guitar. She came in, sat down, tuned her guitar, played a little, and asked me about myself. I told her I had been stationed in Turkey in the army, had just gotten discharged a month earlier and was hitchhiking around Europe for a few months. She asked if I was going to the feast, I said I was, and she said she thought she’d join us.

That evening she came minus guitar. She drank wine but declined to smoke in this setting. At some point, she borrowed someone’s guitar, tuned it a bit and starting playing along with the chanting. After awhile, I think she asked if we could do something other than “Hare Krishna” and actually led the group in a Motown song. I think she also played one of her own songs and invited everyone to join in.

Of course, the novelty of a celebrity among the people wore off in a couple of days and everybody was cool while Carey and Joni did their thing and she came and went. There were equally if not more interesting things going on in Matala at the same time. For one thing, the lives and travels of the 250 or so diverse souls who had happened to come together in that magical place at such an amazing and wonderful time

In addition to the Magic Family, there were hippies from all over the world as well as some members of the London cast of “Hair”, some U.S. military awols, a few lone-wolfs like me, a girl with a foot fetish who could achieve orgasms giving fot massages, some young Greek women from Athens who wanted to make love with a hippie boy (lucky me), and an itinerant Brooklyn-born yoga teacher named Yoga Joe who had lived in India for a number of years.

I took my first ever yoga class from Yoga Joe on the warm soft sand of a dry riverbed up the valley outside of Matala, and later that day dropped acid. It was the the best trip I ever had. A couple of years later, I would enter a yoga ashram and live there 6 years.

I stayed in Matala about a month and left a couple of days after Joni departed. I believe she had heard the rumors of the Greek army coming to chase the hippies out, which they did periodically when the drugs and nudity got to be too much for the townspeople. I thought about staying to see what happened, but then decided discretion was the better part of valor and hiked out hours before the soldiers arrival.

I left Crete for Athens to hook up with a Greek girl I had spent a night on the beach with. She was a law student in Athens and had vowed to show me around if I came to visit her. On one of the main

boulevards there, I happened to pass Joni on the sidewalk. She was well-scrubbed and didn't acknowledge me as she wafted by with a friend. This was during the time of the Junta and that day in Athens there was a military parade with troops, tanks and jets flying overhead.
I spent a couple of days with my Greek girlfriend, Christine, before heading out to Italy. I would later meet up with her again in Paris on Bastille Day where we were tear-gassed in a street riot. I lasted eight months in Europe on $800.00 I had saved in Turkey. It was the craziest time of my life and there is a lot more to tell. But, this was the part of the trip where I shared a little space and time with Joni Mitchell. And whereof, not long after, I would hear part of my experience in one of her songs.
Reply

- **sklug | June 23, 2013 at 8:18 pm Edit**
  I loved reading about your adventures. Thanks so much for sharing it. I'll be going back to Matala next month with these stories in my head as I make the trek over the hill to Red Beach and wander through the caves, and buy Raki from the little old couple who has sat on the side of the road for at least the last 20 yrs that I can remember and probably longer. I bet you would find it hasnt really changed all that much.
  Reply
  - **Bob Kimmick | October 2, 2013 at 6:37 pm Edit**
    Thank you. I was back in '99 and it was a lot more built up and touristy of course. But it still had charm and I wasn't disappointed.
  - **ciaran caughey | July 18, 2017 at 3:52 pm Edit**
    I lived in a cave in Matala for 6 weeks in September,October 1975.Had tears in my eyes when leaving in bus.Went back to Crete in 1985.Visited Matala.It had been totally ruined since my stay.Shame.
- **Antonio | April 22, 2015 at 2:36 am Edit**
  Great story. I spent a couple of days in Matala in the mid 80's…
  Reply

8. **crete | January 27, 2013 at 12:36 pm Edit**
   Spot on with this write-up, I honestly believe this website needs much more attention. I'll probably be returning to read more, thanks for the info!
   Reply
9. **crete | January 27, 2013 at 12:50 pm Edit**
   Greetings! Very helpful advice in this particular article! It is the little changes that will make the greatest changes. Many thanks for sharing!
   Reply
10. **Chris T | January 28, 2013 at 11:34 am Edit**
    Really enjoyed reading this, never been into jodi but more into the scene and the life you guys led back then, my mother lives in Crete, Vamos, and I will be visiting Matala to take a peek this year.

Absolute pleasure to read all these comments, born in 67 gutted I missed it !
Chris, UK
Reply

11. **ambientimages | February 22, 2013 at 10:51 pm Edit**
Fascinating discussion. I was there in autumn a couple of years ago and there were three or four aging hippies there living in the caves and doing occasional farm work for cash. They said there's still a flow of people who come and go in spring and summer.
Anyway, it was great seeing you all piecing the past together like this.
Reply

12. **crete | February 28, 2013 at 4:28 pm Edit**
Summer in Crete lasts eight months … favouring both tourism and the production of goods from Crete's fertile soils, as well as the development of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy.
Reply

13. **crete | February 28, 2013 at 4:34 pm Edit**
In recent years certain operators have attempted an additional "opening" to new markets in order to attract tourism and channel the outstanding products of Cretan land. Crete produces excellent oil, raisins, whereas early vegetables are cultivated and exported throughout Europe, whereas many herbs and native plants are grown in Cretan mountains.
Reply

14. **crete | February 28, 2013 at 4:39 pm Edit**
Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the island, whereas demand has motivated significant investment in hotels, resulting in quantitative and qualitative upgrading of hotel infrastructure and accommodation.
Reply

15. **Steve W | March 21, 2013 at 5:34 pm Edit**
I was in Matala Oct.-Nov. 1973. Lived on Red Beach for a week because Matala was so crowded. Then stayed in the caves by the beach, except when the police would come & chase us away. Then we would stay in the caves above town until they left. Remember Mama & her orange cake. She would always warn us when the police were about to show up. We used to spend some nights at the souvlaki shop, where an English dude had a boom box set up. He got fed for free, because his music drew a lot of business for the owner. I was there when the students in Athens went on strike and the ruling junta sent tanks into the streets. The island was shut down tight, with Greek & NATO forces on alert, until the government fell. It was an incredible time in a beautiful place.
Reply

- **Janette MF | March 22, 2013 at 7:15 pm Edit**
I was on Matala late spring 1972. I remember Mama's orange cake (very hearty!) and eggs with fried potatoes at the Mermaid

Cafe. We would stow all our backpacks and gear in one motel room and hike over the hill every night to sleep on the Red Beach since the police discouraged us from sleeping on the beach at Matala or using the caves. We were with a group of fellow “travelers” and I’m wondering if it was the same “English dude” we used to call Dapper Dan.

Reply

16. **Whitney | May 1, 2013 at 5:51 am Edit**

    Have you ever thought about including a little bit more than just your articles?

    I mean, what you say is important and everything. However think about if you added some great images or video

    clips to give your posts more, “pop”! Your content is

    excellent but with images and videos, this website could certainly be one of the most beneficial in its field.

    Excellent blog!

    Reply

17. **Lee Marks | May 1, 2013 at 11:21 pm Edit**

    40-year-old film and faded snapshots of dubious quality from the early 70’s? Great idea but good luck finding it!

    Reply

18. **Matala Kreta | May 30, 2013 at 12:48 am Edit**

    Hello everybody,

    the television channel “ERT” from greece had made a very nice film about the hippies in Matala. It will be shown the first time during the festival time this June in Matala.

    More information about it

    https://www.facebook.com/pages/Hippie-Hippie-Matala-Matala/463734597028980?fref=ts

    or

http://www.matala-kreta.eu/

1. **Reply**

2. **raspberry ketone diet | June 16, 2013 at 5:05 pm Edit**

    Do you mind if I quote a few of your articles as long as

    I provide credit and sources back to your weblog? My blog is in the very same niche as yours and my users would genuinely benefit from some of the information you provide here.

    Please let me know if this alright with you. Thanks!

    Reply

3. **Jim Hamilton | June 22, 2013 at 12:47 am Edit**

    What memories! I lived in the caves in Matala for a month in early 1968. I don’t recall dayglo paint in the caves or a few other details she gives; the little place must have changed very quickly if she were there in 1968. The next year Life magazine did a cover story on ‘the new Odyssey’ with a couple in a cave on the cover. I still have it. I did not know until today that Carey was about Matala and that Joni had spent time there! Thanks!

    Reply

4. **Jim Hamilton | June 23, 2013 at 5:48 pm Edit**
   Correction to my previous comment, having found the July 19, 1968 Life magazine. I was there in 1967.
   Reply
5. **buy cialis online mastercard | July 11, 2013 at 11:33 am Edit**
   Hi there, just wanted to tell you, I liked this article.
   It was practical. Keep on posting!
   Reply
6. **Janice | July 20, 2013 at 2:14 am Edit**
   How very exciting to find this site. I was in Crete for six weeks in March and April of 1970. The first two weeks I travelled along the north coast and stayed at Vai Beach for about a week. I had heard that Joni was in Matala but had left. Just my luck I thought. I was travelling with an Australian named David I had met on the ferry. After Vai, we went to Matala. I wish I could remember more of my life there. That is one reason I am appreciative of all the previous memories posted. I clearly remember a day on Red Beach when I noticed a blond chick wearing a bikini was about to sing. I went over to listen and with the first note I knew it was Joni. She had really blended in with the group except for the bikini part since everyone else was naked. She was singing Roses Blue for a gentleman who was about to read her tarot cards. I am happy to hear that Stelios is alive and well and living in California. I remember the Mermaid Cafe quite well and the last night I spent there dancing with Cary who had returned from seeing Joni off in Athens.
   Reply
7. **sleep problems | August 9, 2013 at 10:03 am Edit**
   What's up Dear, are you really visiting this website daily, if so after that you will without doubt get pleasant know-how.
   Reply
8. **Karl | September 25, 2013 at 7:42 pm Edit**
   I was there in 1970. I lived in a tent I created out of a roll of black plastic. Every morning an old guy would come by selling grapes to us campers. Never knew the JM connection but it all fell into place once I read about it 10 minutes ago. Took the bus back to civilization outside Mama's where I'd treated myself to a cold drink. Took a boat to Samothraki (deck class) and ended up guest of honor of the police chief at a giant feast. His associate did Zorba's Dance. He let us stay in the police station jail overnight — little apprehensive about that one.Then traveled overland: Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal. Those places are scary sounding now but then I never felt threatened at the time.
   Reply
9. **Jasper Dawson Beckwith | October 10, 2013 at 8:32 am Edit**
   i had a dream (Tucson 1978) i was back in Matala again, crying tears of joy.I visited spring 68, spring 69, lived there winter/spring

73.Anyone remember Shamus (German,fluent in Grk) and his american Jungian wife?Dave (Scot) wife Mary (Brit) and Florin (Dutch) came back from India bearing gifts of Mazar i Sherif incence.Jan-Mar.Jon (Canadian) cooked veg communal meals, David (Wash DC) taught yoga on the beach.Electricity arrived that spring.We went to Alanya in a VW Bus, came back via Bulgaria.Matala must be a cosmic power spot, tattooed onto the hearts of so many mystic travellers-last night i couldnt sleep.
Reply

- **Lynn | October 10, 2013 at 4:44 pm Edit**
  I was there in ’66 and there was a German guy living in a big cave at the end overlooking the sea. He spoke Greek I think but don’t remember what his name was
  Reply

  - **Stephen Raubenheimer | October 20, 2019 at 7:50 pm Edit**
    I was there from Dec ’68 to May ’69 (my previous posts will refer) and lived in (and baptised)The Matala Hilton, with my girlfriend Martha Costello (from Bethesda MD).
    The old bearded guy who lived in the end cave (past the shitcave) & spoke Greek, was a Dutchman called Apie (everyone called him Happy).Most mornings he would go swimming in the surf, then search for wild tomatoes and Zucchini in the hills around Matala, which he would add to the communal salad, we shared with all who came by.
    Apie would always have a couple of tots of Raki after his swim which made him quite animated, and full of jokes.
    By the way, at that time there was only one taverna called Delfini’s. The mermaid must have appeared after we left in May ’69 (about the time Joni arrived, not later).

- **Rita | October 21, 2019 at 6:45 am Edit**
  Hey Stephen…..I was at the caves the months before Easter ’69…..I’m confused by the mention of the Mermaid Cafe too……I only remember Delphini’s (with the battery operated record player) Costa’s (for fine dining) and Momma’s with the delish potato omelets. Did you throw a nude party at the Hilton? I remember being the only soul there with clothes on! I love reading all these memories and thinking back 50 years to my wonderful youth!

- **Peter T | October 21, 2019 at 1:47 pm Edit**
  Fine dining and omelettes in 1969? I don’t remember that at all. I remember the tavern on the beach and two tiny provision shops. That was it.

- **Peter T | October 21, 2019 at 9:33 am Edit**
  Thanks for that clarification. I only remember one tavern too. The one with the lamp outside.
  I realise now that I must have been there in April 1969. There was no mention of Joni Mitchell at all. I had not heard of her at that time anyway.

Was Happy the guy who had outside of his cave a sign asking tourists to leave a cigarette then? (Ignore the fact that there weren't actually any tourists. :))

- **Tim Hitchcock | June 24, 2020 at 7:23 pm Edit**
  My name is Tim and I had been livingI in Greece since Jan 69 , before moving into one of caves of Matala ('Globe City Zero") with my Australian traveling companion, Jill Charlton and our kleptomaniac puppy Laila, plus my lifelong friend Earhardt Dauter , shortly after Easter 1969. I was arrested there the 4th of July night that year with 8 others. It was before Joni Mitchell made her appearance at the Caves. By the way the bearded man begging for cigarettes was not the Dutchman: "Happy" but an Italian named "Rene" (someone had given him an old cigar box which he had taped a hand lettered sight that read, " Tourist Please For Rene A Cigarette" He was a lovely person. I still have a picture of him. It was a dream like existence… Big Mama and Albert, The living Theater and their morning exercises, congregating on the beach around the large laid out stone Peace Symbol to watch the sun sink into the sea while passing around awful, awful wine in plastic jugs…. A lifetime of memories to treasure.
- **Peter | June 25, 2020 at 9:56 am Edit**
  Thanks so much for that post. I had a feeling that the cigarette requester was Italian but i couldn't reconcile it with recognising the name Happy. I also now do remember the name Rene.
  I did not realise the arrests happened so soon afterwards. Looks like we got out just in time.
- **amphibious | August 20, 2021 at 2:00 pm Edit**
  Could Stephan, Rita & Lynn and anyone else who remembers London John (purple velvet Biba trousers, big frizz, coollest kid to escape Henley-on-Thames) please contact me at laddiwee6@gmail.com re his latest (mis)adventures.
  As some may know he went on from Matala to Rhodos then, convinced that he heard the muezzin calling, set off for Kabul and points East where he has remained this last half century.
  Having qualified at Deoband he is now about to re-enter the maelstrom that is the new regime.
  He has been working for the last decade on a non sectarian madrassa in Jalallabad and has the support of the local power brokers.
- **amphibious | October 21, 2019 at 12:08 pm Edit**
  As Stephen accurately notes re Apie.
  He was quite the paterfamilias (SIC! them's was the 60s!) for the strays & waifs who came to live rough but had never built a fire nor lacked hot running water, let alone convenience food at hand.

Also greetings to Rita, our contemporary over 68/69 – I hope that the recent wildfires in CA have not hurt you.

- **amphibious | November 29, 2019 at 1:17 pm Edit**
  Steve & Rita – for some reason my comments languish in moderation for weeks/months or disappear.
  As the old saying goes, “if you don’t see this, let me know…”
  As Stephen accurately notes re Apie.
  He was quite the paterfamilias (SIC! them’s was the 60s!) for the strays & waifs who came to live rough but had never built a fire nor lacked hot running water, let alone convenience food at hand.
  Also greetings to Rita, our contemporary over 68/69 – I hope that the recent wildfires in CA have not hurt you.

- **Tim | July 28, 2015 at 1:57 am Edit**
  I met Seamus (Erhart Dauter) in the spring of 1969 when he arrived in Heraklion with 5 other classmates from the University of Hamburg* for the spring break. I was living and teaching English in Upper Archanes and talked the very straight-laced to move up to my village where
  he was able to rent a house for about $10 a month.He never returned to the University. Later we moved to the caves in Matala (ours was called “Globe City Zero.” It was there that we met a delightful Irishman named Michael Reidy. Disliking his German origins Erhart decided to become Irish and adopted the Nom de Route of “seamus. His friends welcomed the change
  esp. since they could pronounce it “Shameless.” (even now 46 years later it is sill the name he goes by.) While celebrating the 4th of July we were arrested with 8 other denizens of the caves and thrown into jail. Tried and convicted in a most bizarre trial we were sentenced to 6 months in prison. Seamus and I had appealed our convictions to the Greek Supreme Court and after our sentences were over and while waiting in Athens for the Court’s ruling we met
  Keith Kinsolving-Perry who was returning from India in her VW camper van. We lost our appeal and was booted out of Greece on a boa bound for Israel in December of 1969. Keith (the Jungian woman) went with us and they remained together together. They returned to Crete after 7 months in Israel. where we reconected then moved on to Switzerland then Washington D.C. and finally settling down in San Marcos Texas. Sad to say that Keith passed away a couple of years ago. Seamus and have remained in touch all these. and he remains as Shamelessly delightful as he was in those long ago days in Matala.
  Tim
  * He was majoring in Languages- Greek and Russian. Spoke pretty good Greek then.
  Reply

  - **Duncan | September 25, 2020 at 12:07 am Edit**

Tim … it's Duncan the Canadian from Matala and and who stayed with you in Archanes. I have a post below. So great to see you are still keeping the world on its toes.

- **amphibious | September 9, 2020 at 5:26 am Edit**
  Jasper, in case you missed it below – these replies tend to be anachronistic, not a simple linear timeline – but I ran into Yoga Joe again in Goa in Feb-March 1983.
  He said that it was quite incredible how often over the intervening years he had encountered people from that period, 67-70.
  Reply

10. **Jasper Dawson Beckwith | October 12, 2013 at 9:47 am Edit**
    Shamus learned Grk in jail.he taught a class spring 73.he had a little dog, a whippet.he would work summers in Germany (road crew), then spend rest of year in Matala.Wife studied Jung in Switzerland.U.S. 6th fleet played war games off shore May of 73.Scratchy rock and roll-first time i ever heard Moody Blues Legend of a Mind,and 2nd,3rd,4th,5th,6th,etc 68 or 69.i was sleeping in a cave when Martin Luther King was shot.good times, bad times.tangled up in blue,songs are like tattoos, been to sea before Zeus carried Europa to shore at Matala, the girl with the sea green eyes
    Reply

11. **Don Carlson | December 15, 2013 at 9:45 am Edit**
    Hi to all who have been to Matala. I stayed in Matala in 1973 and now after 40 years am taking 45 of my students to Matala in March 2014 but seeing the important historical site of Crete,Santorini and Mainland Greece over 16 days. I have not returned to Crete since the best era ever for travel and enjoyed my stay in Matala while living in the Big Cave on the East side of Matala in April 1973.Look forward to rekindling old memories there but am sure the change of Matala will definitely be significant as it was still a fairly quaint little fishing village when I was there but truly some of the best days of my life before travelling onto to India.
    Best to All who have travelled to Matala. Mary Fraser from Scotland if your out there hope you are doing well.
    Don Carlson
    Counsellor
    History Teacher
    Reply

    - **Edwin Jackson | December 16, 2013 at 7:20 am Edit**
      That time in Matala just keeps bubbling up to the surface. It certainly catapulted me on a journey that is still unfolding and with no visible end in sight.
      By the by last night here in the Little Karoo, here in South Africa, a shooting star shot across the night sky, a greeting to all mankind from a legend, Madiba, Nelson Mandela, as the rain gently fell on his final resting place.
      Reply

- **Vivienne | January 13, 2014 at 6:19 pm Edit**
  You'll find Matala very changed Don but early morning still retains some of the echoes of those times in the 70s. My partner and I have built a stone house in Kamilari, and will be there in April for the Easter celebrations. It seems like we missed each other again, this time by a month! Enjoy your trip. Vivienne
  Reply
- **Jasper Dawson Beckwith | January 26, 2014 at 5:29 am Edit**
  Don i returned from Alanya in April.We must have crossed paths, but i dont recall your name.I left in May after the heat set in.Where do you teach? Jasper D. p.s. do you remember the 6th Fleet war games?
  Reply

12. **DanielFlup | December 20, 2013 at 11:34 am Edit**
    Hello,EveryBody
    Reply
13. **Don Carlson | February 3, 2014 at 3:33 am Edit**
    Hi Vivienne,
    Glad to hear and jealous of course, to hear that you have built a stone house in Kamilari and sad that we missed one another again after 41 years but who is counting. Not that I know you but it is great to read about a small village and how it impacted on so many people through the hippy era.I know I have spoken to my students about my adventures and they are looking forward to our 16 day trip to Crete and too see the Large Cave on the left side of the bay looking south in Matala,Heralion,Rathmyon and Chania as well as Santorini,and 9 days on the mainland to see the highlights of Greece and learn a lot about the culture. Again congrats on your new residence in Kamilari and now that I have looked it up it looks like a quaint and intimate place…watch out Vivienne you may become the new Matala!(joking of course),
    All the best Vivienne, Don Carlson
    Reply
14. **Don Carlson | February 3, 2014 at 4:07 am Edit**
    Hi Jasper,
    I am not sure if you are talking about the same place and time April 1973 Matala, and Alanya (where you had been) last time I looked on a map is about 400 miles from Matala.Any way I was in Matala and another little village Kali Lemenes about 10-15 miles from Matala ,if one were to travel along the coast heading east from Matala.I am a Counsellor(70%) and history teacher(30%) and work at Handsworth Secondary School in North Vancouver BC.I can't remember the 6th fleet you talk about so I would need more clarification on that what you are asking.After Matala I went back to Athens for a few days then off to Turkey ,the Pudding Shop in Istanbul then along the Black Sea by boat to Trabzon, overland Iran, Afghanistan-Herat, Kandahar and Kabul, Pakistan-Peshawar and Lahore and then onto India to Kashmir and Jammu area, via

one of the old hippy buses we connected with in Trabzon,Turkey. I wished I had stayed longer in Matala as it was definitely one of the highlights of my adventures abroad at the age of 20 years.
All the Best
Don Carlson
Reply

- **Jasper Dawson Beckwith | February 9, 2014 at 6:32 am Edit**
  Hey Don last time i was in Sooke, i went swimming at the Pot Holes (Sept 74).I arrived in Matala end of Jan 73.In mid March we (David the yoga teacher, Jon the veggie cook, etc) drove from Athens to Istanbul to Alanya, then returned via Bulgaria, south to Thessalonika, Mt Olympus, Athens, got back to Matala end of April.I never made it to Fair Haven (Kali Lemenes) but i think St Paul did.In Jan i met Dave, Mary his wife, and Florin who were just back from Mazar-i Sheriff when they disembarked in Agios Nikolaos.I told them about Matala and ended up living with them through February.Mama (store) and Papa (baker) were our landlords.Those days are tatooed into my brain.Thanks for sharing the memories. Jasper.
  Reply

- **Don Carlson | March 30, 2014 at 7:33 pm Edit**
  Hi Jasper and all who have visited Matala,
  Sooke Pot Holes hey Jasper, is fairly close to where I grew up near in Belmont Park in Colwood,BC Canada and my parents took me there in the 1950s(dating myself obviously).Well I just returned from a Greece Tour with 45 students and 4 teachers from my school and a tour leader from Athens and yes I selfishly built Matala into the 16 day tour. After spending a couple of days in Heraklion and enjoying the sights near by we planned a half day in Matala and the sun gods were out as 50 of us got off the bus in Matala to bask in the sun and swim and have a picnic. I was taken back by the development as the picture of Matala in 1973 is a stark contrast to what it is today. There is a super market now and many larger buildings and although the Mermaid café is not where it was a young couple had named their bar restaurant the Mermaid Café in honor of the original. The students brought bread, cheese, tomatoes and other munchies and many swam to the caves on the west bank of Matala where I was lucky to get some great shots of them on the Cliffside. The water had some bite but it did not deter any of the students or even me as in April of 1973 it was probably not too much warmer. The beach tar is gone and no black feet at the end of the day so I was happy about that. Chad another teacher and I went on a hike to find the large Clam shaped cave on the upper part of the east cliff as you look south to what would be Africa. As we walked along the waters edge and made out way through the not yet opened funky bar near the end recalled the

nights having drinks and enjoying the scenery and at times I would watch the fishermen return with their catch and tenderize and clean the octopus by beating them against the rocks below. As we walked up the steps to a restaurant in the process of getting ready to open I asked the owner if the large cave was still up on the cliff and mentioned I had lived in it in 1973.Welcome my friend was his response and he said it was still there but you will have to be careful hiking up there in sandals! Chad and I set off and in about ten minutes found the large open air cave and yes it was just like it was 41 years ago. Now though there appears to be a memorial tent badly weathered inside the cavern ,a clothes line with weathered clothes, old cushions to sit on and pots and pans lade out as if someone was coming for dinner. I recall roasting baked potatoes in a fire there and four or five of us relaxing admiring the view which still is spectacular and yet I ponder how I made it up to the cave each night after partying in the village late into the night in 1973.Maybe we are, in many ways, like homing pigeons who know where safe haven is regardless of our condition. Chad took a picture of me in the cave and we walked up to the crest of the hill above. Remnants of an old Shepard's shelter is still there a little more rustic than I recall in 1973 but the sheep were still there in the hills. Beyond the pathway to Red Beach was visible and a couple of caves as well. One cave entrance on the way to Red Beach had a blue tarp blowing in the wind but knowing we had 45 students and three other people watching out over our 45 students we made our way down from the hilltop and walked toward the beach. Another young couple getting ready for the tourist season were stacking their shelves an I said "do you have any T-shirts of Matala. After tearing open a number of boxes he came across an XL black T-shirt with the inscription " Live Life Today" on the front but on the back it said " Tomorrow Never Comes" and below it on the front the loco "Matala". How much? Ten euros! Such a deal I thought and said Ok I will take it. Despite the longing for the past the reality is change that all of us have to adapt to and at the age of 62 years the beauty of Matala is still there just in a different form. I could still live in the big cave at this age and be quite happy and the island of Crete and Matala is still incredibly beautiful. One night in Athens with the Greek Tour Leader of this school trip we talked about the old days and he said you are a lot older but in many ways the hippy culture in the late 60s and early 70s should be given credit for the tourism of Greece.Maybe there is a grain of truth to his statement and if not we can ride it for all it is worth any way! Touring Greece is very beautiful but sad to see that it is a country in crisis. Numerous unfinished buildings, graffiti galore and for such a beautiful country it is need of repair. Still having travelled

a lot Greece is still, and the islands in particular, one of my favorite countries to visit but the Greek Islands in particular are magical. As we drove past a beautiful beach near Sounion on the mainland of Greece I asked our guide how much would that beautiful large house on the beach cost? He said now about 300 thousand euros but four years ago easily two or three times that amount. A student said near the end of the tour was Matala nostalgic for you Mr. Carlson and I relied yes it really was and as we got off the plane in Vancouver I looked at Kate one of our students and she was wearing a large floppy straw hat, along dress down to the ground and a cut off fur vest typical of the hippy era grew up in the 60s and early 70s!Great time had by all! Best DON

15. **Jasper Dawson Beckwith | April 13, 2014 at 11:31 am Edit**
    Hi Don how exciting to read your words and travel back in time.My first two visits were March/April of 68 and 69. A Spring does not pass without a memory of star filled skies or the tinkling of sheep bells. what an amazing trip for B.C. youth to fly half way around the globe, and how fortunate for you to revisit. i remember the big cave full of people in 73.xairete. Jasper D.
    Reply
    - **Rita Wilson | March 31, 2017 at 4:27 am Edit**
      Hello Jasper…I lived in the caves the months before Easter ’69. Enjoyed your reminisces. Beautiful time in Crete….spring
      Rita
      Reply
      - **Tim Hitchcock | September 30, 2020 at 7:58 pm Edit**
        Hi Rita, I moved into a cave that had “Globe City Zero” carved on its outside side Cliff entrance. It was the last lowest cave farthest from the bay, by a small clump of trees. A little after Easter (first part of April) in 1969, I moved into that cave with Jill Charlton , my dog Laila, and good friend Erhart Dauter. By any chance, do you know who inhabited my cave when its name was carved at its doorway? Tim Hitchcock
16. **roger sullivan | June 16, 2014 at 6:12 am Edit**
    Barry, is that you who was totally clean and sober? Were you living in a lower level cave to the right when facing the hill?
    Reply
17. **Jasper Dawson | December 16, 2014 at 12:36 am Edit**
    the stream of words seems to have dried up. Six months since Roger’s comment. Matala remains, the deep moans round with many voices. The winter sun stands still, then takes a dip in the Libyan Sea. Do you follow?
    Reply
18. **sklug | July 29, 2015 at 10:55 am Edit**

I will be going back to Matala again next week, and I will have all of your stories in my head as I explore the caves, clamber over the mountain to Red Beach, and watch the sunset over the water. Please return there if you can! The people of Matala, who live mainly from tourists coming to stay in the tiny family-run guest houses and restaurants, need you!
Although I am originally from California, I live in Hamburg, Germany. A lot of the tourists come from Germany, and with the current economic crisis many of the German people are staying away from Greece because they fear retribution for the Greek economic situation.
Last year one of the restaurant owners didn't even bother to open his restaurant because it would cost more to keep it open than he was earning, and he needed to take in his extended family from Athens who had lost their jobs, to stay on their small farm where they grow olives and tomatoes. He said that his retired father was getting a 500 euro per month pension, and since the healthcare system has collapsed he needed to pay 300 cash to get the heart medication he needed. They are in a difficult situation, but just as warm and generous and welcoming as ever!
Reply

19. **Carol Noll | February 23, 2017 at 10:24 pm Edit**
    I lived on Red Beach throughout the summer of 1973. The caves of Matala were closed and not too wholesome. I was there during the time of the Olympic Games in Munich. We played our own Olympic games on the beach and in the sea until the shocking news reached us when one of the travellers living there hiked back from Matala with the news from Munich. We were about 12 o 13 who lived on that stunning Red Beach that summer. I would love to touch base with Pierre from Paris or anyone else who might have been a member of our little troupe. It was a life-chasing experience and like so many above on these pages had a big influence on my life.
    Carol
    Reply

    - **James Hamilton | February 24, 2017 at 2:30 am Edit**
      I lived there in late '67 and part of '68… Joni had not been there yet. My cave was one of those that still had a coffin-shaped sepulchre carved out of the limestone by the Romans, or so we were told. The taverna had an incredible atmosphere and someone brought the new LP Sergeant Pepper. We had a dress-up party around it, but most of us had only the clothes we wore daily, and fit right in with the album cover. The caves were relatively clean and when "the wind blew in from Africa" they had a fresh sea smell which apparently was long gone when Joni was there in '73. Thanks, Carol, for bringing back one of the great memories of that epic decade. Jim Hamilton
      Reply

20. **Lynn | March 22, 2017 at 6:00 pm Edit**

I was there in early ’66 for about two months. We were a group of 5 Canadians. Evenings were spent at the taverna drinking retsina and watching the local shepherds dance. Fantastic! There was a German fellow called Hans who had been there for some time. He lived in the large cave at the very end, right over the ocean. Anyone remember him? There was also a fellow from California called Mike. He had been there for some time also. Some of my best memories!

Reply

- **Liam | March 22, 2017 at 7:08 pm Edit**
  I remember 4 Germans there. Peter.. with the scrambler bike from komo beach. Bern.. friedholm and hans.. but probably a different one to yours. This was 1979. We lived in most of the caves.

  Reply

  - **Hero Lavelle | June 12, 2017 at 10:53 pm Edit**
    It was about 1970 when I arrived at Matala,I seem to remember turning 17 on the ferry to Israel. So I am writing to say hi again but also to relate a wild story about her. (It’s a great story) and she was very kind. When I was there the archeologists had just started digging out caves near the end of my time there. A little over a month and the guy who seemed to speak for the group and negotiated for them was an American named Bruce Forman Several years later it wound up we were living 1 block from each other in LA. So now a year or so later I had a girlfriend who loved the stories I had and we both were about to enter long periods of time in school a trip around the blue orb seemed in order..So LA to UK and then down to Barcelona and out to Ibiza. We rented 2 houses for $6 a month for both. Anyway when we arrived in Ibiza it was late but I thought we could make it to a place called San Carlos in the middle of the island so as I said, it was night time and there was no moon. I have never seen darkness like that. I grew up on a sailboat and had spent many many nights on watches while racing and I never saw it so you could not see your hand 4 inches in front of your face. so we arrived and my girl is making noise about it was dark and “Are you sure we will be OK?” and ” We don’t even know where we were going (All true to but immaterial to me,). So about 3 hours later there was no one left on the bus and the driver does not speak Spanish, english or french we could handle about 5 between us but not Ibizenco, then several minutes later the bus stopped and driver walked out into the pitch black.
    So now were alone and she will be fine but she doesn’t know this. Now hungry & frightened the poor thing was on the verge of tears. We were really tired and she asked me to explain for the 100th time ” “How can you be sure this is going to turn out well?” and I repeated what I had said and took her hands in mine and said ” Have I ever lied to you?”

and she said “Yes, you told me the dog ate the Milano cookies” “Right but other than that?” she paused and reluctantly, with a furrowed brow said “No” and then I could see the gears spinning. She was a brilliant woman/student , and we were 19 years old and she wanted to believe me but she was raised by Rocket Scientists, (Father designed and built rockets for Hughes rocket division) and so in this air, thick with her uncertainty her shoulders started to turn towards me look and it struck me how alien this all was to her. Plus all she was getting from me was anecdotal reasons to not be afraid. So we had gotten onto a bus we were 100 miles from anywhere I figured which to me just looks like adventure and I had to figure out how to let her understand why I was having a blast and she was terrified . she took a breath and I held up my hand and said ” Humor me OK”” I want to explain why we are here and that there are no accidents. So then for some reason I said ” When people talk about me what is the thing they say they say most ? other than ” My god he’s good looking”.(I’m not, but she is) she thought for a second and then with her head cocked ever so slightly said ” That you are lucky” and I nodded and waited until she said ” That you have an almost petranatural sense of where to be and not to be” I asked ” Do you believe them “? and she said” I don’t see how that matters right now. So I said ” We are seekers and the universe, favors seekers.”

So I was not that surprised when a young man in his twenties with a flashlight stepped into the bus pointed the flashlight into the back of the bus, the beam on us, and said “Hey, are you guys Americans”we answered in the affirmative and he said “man what luck, I wasn’t going to come this way but I did for some reason and I’m on my way to a party it Joni Mitchell’s house.” We explained we didn’t know where we were and we had nowhere to stay, to which he replied “Joni has a heart of gold you can stay there at her house until you find a place but I think I know where you will be living” So we went to the party we had a great time spent the night at Joni’s behest and the next day began our stay on Ibiza which we figured would last two or three nights. We stayed for a year. When were young our beliefs are not muddled by experience so it’s easier to believe “We are seekers and seekers are always protected” but having now having survived terminal cancer twice, I continued traveling the world trying to learn and be helpful, while experiencing the wonders of the world, studying with Enlightened Masters and seen so many things which are impossible in the world as we know it, I would like to say “We are seekers and seekers are always protected”

- **Liam | June 13, 2017 at 5:57 pm Edit**

Lovely story. I hope you've written this all down ? :)

- **Sean coleman | June 16, 2017 at 8:20 am Edit**
  Hi Liam,
  Every once in awhile I remember something that happened and I'll write it down and post it on Facebook or something. I've been sober a long time and I inherited the storytelling Gene from my Irish grandparents. So three times a week I would be somewhere in the United States talking to a thousand people just about my life and how it was what happened and how it is today. So I would say that I've been asked by 500 – 1000 people to write a biography. And I just can't build up to it because I know the story completely boring thing about most people is that they stay on their couch and never leave their City it's amazing. Spent a lot of time well that's relative like a year and a half in India and Nepal have you been to India. India is the most remarkable place ever it's alive. I don't know if you've heard of a mountain in Tamil Nadu called Arunachala but if you haven't been there for thousands of years people of different faiths and traditions mainly Hindu from the camp of Ramana maharshi type. So I stayed there for about a month-and-a-half I guess my Visa was running out and I had to get out of the country and then I could come back but it is the god Shiva.they believe that the mountain itself down to the Center of the Earth is the god Shiva Liam. if you got one more big trip in you India's the place. You know a way you could kind of see what I've been doing is my Instagram account which is Sean Coleman all lower case 340 so one word Shawn Colvin 3:40 and there's a lot of pictures of a lot of places to hear my friend
- **Liam | June 16, 2017 at 11:42 am Edit**
  Fascinating Sean..
  I believe these experiences are key to surviving addiction. And sharing that definitely will help others. Never had the pleasure of going to that part of the world.. usa and all over Europe mainly. Kids and work keeps me here.
  But my early life resonates with my past experience.. becoming a professional sculptor, artist, tv presenter on discovery channel called fix your house for free. My natural eco friendly building materials company..

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1.
   -
     - are all directly influenced by the caves and utilising washed up African flotsam on como beach. I've mentioned here about what we went through and I've nearly completed my book. It would be great to read yoir story Sean.. it's cathartic.
2. **Ray Minhas | June 11, 2017 at 7:18 pm Edit**

I visited Matala for the second time last week, previously visiting 30 years ago. A nostalgic trip with a lot of good memories from the 80's. A friend and I had rented a couple of motorbikes and toured the island from Heraklion and settled in Matala for a few days. The town is very commercial not as I remember it in 1987. However it definitely still has the laid-back hippie feel. I remember there used to be a nightclub/ disco where the Hakuna Matata restaurant now stands. The caves are now fenced off and they charge 6 euros to go visit them… still worth a trip wandering around there casting your mind back to what it must have been like in the 60's/70's.. My sister visited Matala in 76 and by that time the hippies had left she said. When did folks actually stop living in the caves… must have been around 75 or 76?? Would be interested to know.

Reply

- **Liam | June 11, 2017 at 10:46 pm Edit**
  I was there when I was 12 . My little brother was 4. And we were there in 1979 and all.the caves were available to sleep. Which we did.. the tombs above the sea cave on the 3rd tier. And the one on the other side of the bay behind the mermaid mamas cafe. And another big one way behind up over the herb field where all the noisy bees used to hum en masse!

  Reply

- **Anna | June 15, 2017 at 11:51 am Edit**
  Hey Ray, we did not leave the caves in 1970, we werde kicked out by the american army military police together with greek Military Police. At that time, greece was not a democratic country and many people in the 'village' (there was no village, only summer houses from Sivas and Pitsidia People) , anyway exactly the same people that earn a fortune now with the romantic Hippy- Mythos, were the ones who ended it.
  I will for sure not visit that festival, i will not buy a "hippy dress" and I will not have a drink at Hatuna Matata, which blocks a beautiful path to the sunken roman bath.
  Have a nice day (tomorrow never comes is for the Teenys).

  Reply

  - **Liam | June 15, 2017 at 1:13 pm Edit**
    When I was 12 living in all those different caves in 1979 inflicted on us by our rebellious hippie my… there were some weeks without incident. But that idyllic scene was often marred with violence from the locals coming down and beating us all up. They didn't like men or boys with long hair. They saw us as gypsies. Good people arrested and slung in a jail for a year for one joint! Excessive retsina binging. Locals grassing up pot smokers. Not pleasant but they accepted our money.

  - **amphibious | June 15, 2017 at 1:35 pm Edit**
    Liam & Anna seem to grasped the essential sad futility & hypocrisy of the nostalgia fest.
    Even in the 60s one had to be aware of the hate, fear & loathing which the over entitled, ignorant & arrogant 'gap

year' tourists evoked amongst the Cretan.
Unlike the earlier travellers and even the original, true hippies who were mostly working class and graduates of the University of Hard Knocks and thus far closer to the locals in every way.
Sad to read about what Matalla has become – inevitable I guess when *kulturs* clash – but I saw the same thing happen in Afghanistan, India and even Morocco.
When we first went there we were aware of being Strangers in a Strange Land and acted accordingly but those who came afterwards exhibitted the worst of western excesses in societies when hubris was an affront and unworthy of respect.

3. **amphibious | August 12, 2017 at 10:18 pm Edit**
   Stephan – g'day mate, I remember you well, as well as Martha & Julia.
   I've posted a longer reply with details only you would know but I can't tell if it has been "accepted" or not so shall leave it for a day or two in case there is some form of moderation, rather than repeat it.
   Reply
   - **Stephan Raubenheimer | September 1, 2017 at 1:45 am Edit**
     G'Day to you too Amphibious. Can't wait for your reply.
     Reply
   - **Stephan Raubenheimer | November 29, 2019 at 11:41 pm Edit**
     Well, Hi again Amphibious. Sadly I saw the news about the Antiquity Police having chained off the "Roman Ruins of Matala" & charge not only parking fees but entry fees to explore the 'ancient buriel crypts of Matala.
     I believe there is tarred parking for 500 cars! (who can remember my old green VW Beetle with a Springbok on the engine cover, being virtually the only car there for most of early 1969 ☺)
     Reply
4. **Peter | December 12, 2017 at 9:14 pm Edit**
   I was in Matala in April 1969 with my girlfriend at the time. Apart from it being idyllic I remember the following:
   2 supermarkets – I only ever used the one in the second row of fishermans cottages behind the cafe/bar.
   I don't remember the cafe/bar having a name at that time but we may have not noticed it.
   In the caves one of the residents had a sign outside saying 'Tourists – please leave cigarette for X'
   It was very hot that April. We were all thirsty all the time. A couple of guys went exploring along the cliff behind the caves and found an orange and lemon orchard. I remember them saying that the trek was a very long nightmare and when they arrived at the orchard they gulped down lemons as if they were sweet.
   Reply

- **domain | December 14, 2017 at 2:11 am Edit**
  The citrus groves were at Phaestos, best reached over the clifftop then via a thyme & pine scented track up & down eventually along the beach.
  To go by road is long and dusty, back via Mires and not worth the effort.
  Reply
- **amphibious | December 14, 2017 at 1:33 pm Edit**
  I recall a crazy US deserter, who originally came in Feb 68 on a 48hr pass from the Iraklion USAF base and was so blown away by the sheer hedonism that he burned his ID, hammered his dog tag into particles and let it all hang out.
  I remember 'Sam' replying, on being asked whether he was dangerous, "depends what's on offer!"
  He could not be convinced that the range groves he was plundering in Phaestos were all private property – he claimed that they were those of Knossus gone feral. Never mind the intervening 3 millennia.
  Reply
  - **Peter | February 1, 2018 at 10:28 pm Edit**
    I was there in '69 but I don't remember any hedonism. It was all calm and civilised.
    Sounds like it went downhill shortly afterwards.

5. **Peter | February 1, 2018 at 10:11 pm Edit**
   I went to Crete for last Christmas. I could not bring myself to go to Matala after seeing the photos of its present state. We had a great time. It goes without saying that Crete is now an entirely different place.
   I am sure I was in Matala before Joni Mitchell. No one mentioned an American pop singer when I was there. Actually I don't remember any Americans there at all.
   I don't remember there being 2 restaurants either. I remember that when we arrived there were a couple of English guys sitting at a table at a cafe next to the beach and one of them was very politely drooling over my girlfriend. I have a feeling he may have been a dropout from Oxford. I was a dropout from law school. He seemed to have been there for a while. He showed us to an empty cave with an air of authority.
   Reply
6. **Cary Raditz | May 14, 2018 at 12:08 am Edit**
   Many of you around Matala may remember that Mark Wheeler and I had a sandal shop, the Matala Leather Shop. We started it in November 1969 in our cave complex and then moved across Matala to a small shop we rented on the cliffs at the south end of the harbor when I returned from Kabul in early 1970.
   Here is the thing. I have not seen Mark since I left Matala in June 1970. J and I heard in London later that fall that he had run afoul of the law in Iraklion in an unfortunate hashish bust at the youth hostel and was in jail. We could not identify a way to assist him. Stelios, Joni and I are keen to locate Mark and Barbara, his partner

in those days. If any of you have a bearing on Mark—or Barbara—please leave a note where I can contact you. Many thanks! Cary
Reply

- **amphibious | May 14, 2018 at 10:30 am Edit**
  i had several pics of Barbara & Mark when we lived in the Triplex, they on the left and the black ExArmy bloke with the tiny B&W puppy… Thomas?.
  Alas I lost these a couple of years ago when a burglary meant that they were stolen, probably because they were in a strong, metal a couple of years ago box which presumably was believed to be a cash box.
  Fifty years of pics & negs, from mid 60s Morocco through Afghanistan, India etc.
  Of no value to the thief, immeasurable loss to me.
  In 2006/7 I put some up on this site but not being very tekky, cannot find them.
  Reply

- **Liam Collins | May 14, 2018 at 11:45 pm Edit**
  We're things better in those days? Our mum brought us there in 1979..i was 12 my brother 4. German Peter was selling hash from the caves on como beach. Francois was chased and caugjht by 100s of cops over that mountain.. bullets whizzing in the sand.
  Friends were arrested for smoking joints and arrested right on the beach.. apparently the omellate seller grassed him up. 1 year 1 joint..
  Locals storming our cave now and then over the herb field up the hill directon from behind mama's cafe and beating everyone up. Well I guess it was an experience for a couple of young hippie kids to reflect on! All because their mother had an odd fixation of star chasing. She also dragged us to lenny cohens place in hydra! Hope you find your friends.
  Reply

7. **Peter Steed | January 6, 2019 at 5:46 am Edit**
   Hi, just came across this site memories!!!. I was in Matala, think about summer 1969. Don't remember much, but I recall we slept in the empty cottages on the beach until the police kicked us out with rifles pointed. However, one night an American guy emerged from the sea and told us he had jumped overboard from a US naval vessel, no passport no money…I also remember the dried river bed and some experiences. I am from London and met up with some Canadians and Americans in staying on the beach in Corfu prior to Crete, with whom I eventually travelled to Amsterdam. I was nineteen and previously travelled / worked around Australia for a few years.
   Now living in a beautiful location Noosaville, Australia, with a Thai wife of twenty years. We have a house in Thailand, but had to return to Oz as diagnosed with aggressive cancer, still going strong…Would be incredible to hear from anyone from that time.
   Reply

- **Lynn | January 14, 2019 at 7:23 pm Edit**
  I was there in late 1968 with 4 other Canadians and stayed for a few months in the caves. Incredible spot and terrific memories. There was a big German guy living in a large cave right at the end of the outcrop of caves. He had been there for quite some time and knew most of the villagers and the shepherds who came to the little restaurant to eat and drink. And dance!
  Was he still there when you were there?
  Reply
  - **amphibious | January 14, 2019 at 10:37 pm Edit**
    I think that perhaps you mean ‘Happy’ who was Dutch and had been a fixture there for many, many seasons, only returning to Holland occasionally to keep up his pension entitlements.
    He hurt his back quite badly when one of the newly occupied caves collapsed on a Canadian couple and he tried to hard to move the rock crushing the woman’s pelvis.
    She survived and went on to have children which seemed unlikely at the time as it was very serious.
    He went into a bit of a decline after that and more or less retired to Holland in 69 or 70 as he was no long able to live as vigorously as was his wont.
  - **Rita | January 15, 2019 at 8:47 am Edit**
    Happy New Year Friend….Life goes on…..
  - **Lynn | January 15, 2019 at 7:55 pm Edit**
    Hi….actually was there in late 1966 not 1968…..the fellow I am thinking of could have been Dutch….big guy, didn’t speak much English at all
  - **Stephan Raubenheimer | November 30, 2019 at 1:20 am Edit**
    G’day Amphibious.
    Re ‘Happy’ :
    Around late Jan ’69 Martha & I would get up around 5 & sit on the Hilton ‘verandah’ and watch the surf. It was still winter but most mornings ‘this old bearded guy’ would play in the surf for a while then pay us a visit for breakfast. (I bought the cave and it’s furniture for $5 – a bamboo table, a kerosene stove and some pots, plates, a frying pan & assd utensils so we could really make a serious breakfast – oats porridge or grits, omelets, flapjacks, scones). Anyway, He’d always bring along some raki for a short schnapps to welcome the sun. He had the end cave and when the tide was up he’d dive into deep water from his cave. His name was “Apie”, a common Dutch name (also lovingly meaning ‘little monkey’.
    Apie would climb up over the hill above the caves for hours and return with little tomatoes, zucchini & herbs we’d use for a communal salad that we’d share and contribute to with neighbours, and sundry loner’s.
    Lovely memories

8. **Rita | January 15, 2019 at 8:49 am Edit**
   BTW,,,,celebrating 50 Golden Years since we shared the beach!
   Reply
   - **amphibious | January 15, 2019 at 4:48 pm Edit**
     Rita, funny to be reading this now, I'll be 71 tomorrow. Hope that all is well with readers.
     Wonderful times and I doubt that we'll see their like again.
     Reply
     - **Rita | January 15, 2019 at 7:46 pm Edit**
       Happy Birthday! I'm turning 72 in two weeks……we haven't emailed for a while and I'm pleased we are still kicking' and tickin'!
     - **Rita | January 26, 2020 at 7:41 am Edit**
       Here it is another year……Happy Birthday again and always!
     - **Stephen Raubenheimer | October 1, 2020 at 4:37 pm Edit**
       Hi Amphibious, it's Stephen again.
       I'm 76 now and still pining for year '69 in Matala, and wondering if anyone has photos of the Xmas '68 party and New Year's Eve at Delfinis. Can't remember his name (Costa?), but he laid his entire stock of Raki, Ouzo, Retsina on the counter for those with "ligo lefta" (no money). and spent his time shouting "Katastrof!", while smashing his mothers platters and empty bottles on the floor (for all to dance on, Greek style). Crazy & endearing times!
       After Martha got Hepatitis (Patitis) & spent time recovrring in Iraklion, I drove my Beetle up the coast of Yugoslavia, and ended up as a stage hand in an Austrian travelling theater, then dumping my Beetle and hitch-hiking to Rome then Pamplona for the "Running of the Bulls" (re-united with Martha), & ending up in Tangiers, watching the Apollo 11 Moon Landing.
     - **amphibious | October 2, 2020 at 8:35 am Edit**
       Stephen, g'day mate. As you might have noticed from Rita & others, the Class of 69 lingers on.
       My plan to visit all my old haunts in 2020 has taken an odd turn.
       I'm currently **in exile** within my country of birth – I came back for a quick visit in 2019, then caught by the bushfires over Xmas/NY and just as they were subsiding about to return to the Northern Hemisphere forest I planted last century when covid blew that out of the water.
       I suppose that we will all just have to be thankful for our good luck in being born post WWII and seeing the culmination of the Enlightenment up to the close of the 20thC.
       Since then Darkness Visible is enveloping the world and we

shall not be ale to enjoy times like that again.
SEMPER VITAE

9. **stephengapes9266 | January 27, 2019 at 8:03 am Edit**
   I lived on the beach in Matala in 1977 and remember the cafe well. There was a dog living on the roof and had been for years. Seems it used to kill chickens so was tossed up there, fed by passersby and drank rainwater. I remember hearing Joni Mitchell songs playing non-stop in the village taverna.
   Reply
10. **Jeff Mayer | July 3, 2019 at 10:40 pm Edit**
    I was in Create January of ’73 and stumbled into Matala while taking a bus someplace else I stayed one night left with memories of JM song and the crabs . after leaving Create I spent 3 months in Israel growing flowers then back to Athens where I hooked up with the Magic Bus eventually becoming a driver
    Reply
11. **Savvas | October 20, 2019 at 1:02 pm Edit**
    Wow, I wish I had found this thread earlier! My dad would have loved it, unfortunately he passed away about 1.5 year ago. He was in Matala at the same time as Joni Mitchell, not sure who got there first, but he apparently left for Athens with her “troupe” once he had enough of the place. I remember him saying there was one record player with only one LP being passed around from cave to cave.
    If any of you happen to have any memories of him, please do share. He was Greek, name of Evangelos, shortened to Vangelis or probably Van to the foreigners. He would probably have been drawing/sketching a lot as was his habit – he went on to become a well-known cartoonist and would sketch compulsively on anything available.
    Reply
    - **Rocky Schmit | October 21, 2019 at 11:20 am Edit**
      Savvas … Sorry to hear about the passing on of your Dad … He had a great heart and a seeking spirit … We looked him up again at his oil press some years ago … He had his young son with him … Maybe it was you? … We were visiting from Sweden … Blessings
      Rocky & Elisabeth
      Reply
      - **Savvas Alexandros Pavlidis | November 29, 2019 at 2:35 pm Edit**
        Hi Rocky and Elizabeth! Yes, that was me at the oil press. Nice to hear from you! Hit me up on Facebook if you use it.
12. **Joe Donohoe | November 10, 2019 at 3:23 am Edit**
    Does anyone who was in Matala in the early ’70s remember an English man named Danny Donohoe who was there at the time? He knew Joni and Carey really well and possibly stayed in the cave next to hers. He also had an American girlfriend there named Vicky.

I'm his son and would love to read any anecdotes or memories anyone else might have of him. Any photos would be amazing too. Thanks so much!

Reply

13. **Tym Manley | January 12, 2020 at 10:11 pm Edit**

    I first came to Matala in the summer of 1968 and hooked up with Mac Pate and a girl who I always think of as Peggy, although I don't really know that was her name. She had a wonderful smile and her eye glasses were so thick she could have read a newspaper on Mars. We lived in the Hilton with some other friends and we had a record player, at least Mac did, he had a record too and when the cave echoed to the Fish Cheer it was all his fault.

    I was tall and scrawny and mostly blond hair, having left most of my weight and money in Afghanistan, but I had my girlfriends classical guitar which I tried to make sound like the Steve MillerBlues Band which took some doing.

    It was magic then, there was talk of some famous singer hanging out there, but I didn't know who Joni was back then. I didn't know what a Big Mac was or root beer, I'd seen a chocolate milk shake but never tried on and there I was on a diet of bean soup and tomato salad surrounded by Americans torturing themselves with food fantasy.

    We all stuck together and made it back to Paris where we split up swearing to meet in London. Then I got mixed up with some musicians and when I got back Peggy had been and gone with the message that I was months late and probably dead.

    Never saw those guys again, although I think of them from time to time.

    Damn.

    But the point is not to ramble on about the Francophone girls who put flowers in our cave every morning and so forth, but to ask if anyone has found a part of Crete that is more like Matala was then? My kids and grandkids are sick of hearing of the place and would like to see it, but I have been back a few times and I know how it was in 2009 so they might be better off with my memories unless there the odd pockets of the island where shepherds and Lira players still exist and bad tempered grannies grumble as they burn the used toilet tissue on the beach…

    Ciao,

    Tym

    Reply

    - **Lynn | January 13, 2020 at 1:40 am Edit**

      To quote Thomas Wolfe 'You Can't Go Home Again'…… remember it as it was, as I do. Best times ever living in those caves walking the beach area, washing my hair under the village pump in the centre of town (freezing cold water), dancing with the shepherd in the one taverna, don't recall the name, sitting in the end cave with 'Happy'? overlooking the ocean, the omelet, the fried squid sliced right off the squid hanging in the tree outside the taverna……..still in contact with

the 5 Canadian guys from Vancouver and the girls from Montreal that I travelled with for that year……..

Reply

- **Rita | January 26, 2020 at 7:37 am Edit**
  I remember the pump hair wash…..it was like an external brain freeze! Lynn, when were you there. I'm still friends with my two traveling companions, 2019 was our 50th anniversary……Matala couldn't have been a more perfect place to live in 1969, so fun, beautiful, safe. I wish the world would turn back time and we could live like that again.

- **Lynn | January 26, 2020 at 5:24 am Edit**
  Too late I believe….Crete has been discovered…..hold the memories close, it was special then

  Reply

  - **amphibious | January 26, 2020 at 1:40 pm Edit**
    I'm about to return to Euroland and will make a pilgrimage to Matala, despite what I see on the Intertubes and recent reports of visits on this site.
    I went back in the mid70s -when the caves were FENCED OFF, FFS! but settled happily into a cave that, like my original in 1968, was virtually invisible due to silting up, half way to Red Beach.
    I did NOT dig this one out as I did previously.
    It was just possible to slip through the narrow gap between soil & stone into the interior which was huge and empty and it seemed ideal to keep it that way, nobody knew where I was living it that suited me just perfectly..
    I stayed there for three months, occasionally coming down to the village and tried not to be too cynical about what I saw.
    I wonder what I'll find in 2020? Possibly Spring but more likely Autumn as I must visit many other sites of those far away times, see old friends (OLD being the operative word – just turned 72 myself) and ponder what has become of the Enlightenment with Darkness Visible now encroaching all over.
    Rita, Stephen & Gary, any chance of a reunion?

    - **Stephen Raubenheimer | October 1, 2020 at 4:45 pm Edit**
      I don't know if the girls new, but us guys used to draw lots to hand pump water for the girls' showering. 😃

14. **Tym Manley | January 25, 2020 at 9:16 pm Edit**
    I can think of few things more disturbing than to find those same people believing and doing those same things fifty years on. I don't want to go home, I just need somewhere near enough to show my grandchildren what it was like. Is there no part of Crete that has avoided excessive progress?

    Reply

    - **William Bayers | September 10, 2020 at 8:29 am Edit**

There is Tym, I was there in the early 70's and have returned many times. Crete is has been the rapture of man for over 10,000 years of it's history. Iv'e been back countless times and never have I been disappointed. I have brought my friends, wife and my daughter and they all have a great feel for the island. Certainly Matala is not the same but there are many ,many places on the great island that are very interesting and rewarding. So much of the character of the warm and loving Cretans, their way of life and history of the island wears on many people forever. My wife and I go back every year for 3 months. We rent a car and spend half the time exploring villages in the mountains and beaches, but always go back to the area close to Matala and spend the rest of our time in the small town of Kamilari , only 8 km. away. Rent a car and explore the big island with your grand kids and they will remember it forever. I understand your nostalgia for it is within many. Please give it to your family. Cheers

Reply

15. **Rita | February 28, 2020 at 7:38 am Edit**
    Dear Amphibious……Sign me up! I'm always ready for a trip across the pond +. I think we'll be over Sept/Oct for at least 30 days. Keep in touch and we'll find a way. Just read a book about a Magic Bus Driver/traveler titled "Hippie".....couldn't relate, it was an attempt to capture that '68-'69 time that can't be written, it can only be lived.
    Reply

    - **amphibious | June 22, 2020 at 11:54 am Edit**
      Rita, wonderful to hear from you. The world has changed slightly since I last wrote.
      I'm currently "marooned" in Oz, having come back briefly in 2019 and, as Robbie Burns wrote "*the best laid plans of mice & men gang oft aglay*!".
      This country probably suffered least from the C19 Plague, apart from Aotearoa (big YAY! for Jacinda Ardern) but it is virtually impossible – not to mention stoopid – to get on board a flying aluminium Petri tube for 24hrs at the moment.
      Emirates is offering flights to Euroland from midJuly but the problem is where to land.
      I hope that you and yours are doing well.
      Reply

      - **Rita | June 23, 2020 at 9:10 am Edit**
        Yes……many changes! We have tickets for Paris in September, but I truly doubt we will be using them, again those best laid plans! Doing lots of gardening to while away the hours, everything here looks great, do to all the attention I'm lavishing on the flowers and trees…..to bad I can't have a big party to show off my handy work. I miss friends and family gatherings and just wandering the earth freely. Stay healthy and in touch…..

    - **Lynn | September 20, 2020 at 3:37 am Edit**

This is Lynn of the pump hair wash! We were a group of Canadians who were there in 1966. Best days of our lives…will never forget

Reply

16. **Peter | June 22, 2020 at 2:44 pm Edit**

    I went back to Matala in January 2019 to show a new partner some of my earlier life. It was just as bad as the photos on the internet show. The caves are now behind a fence where you pay to get access.

    There must have been at least 20 people wandering over the caves as we were looking. I don't think I recognised a single building in the village.

    I haven't looked at this post for a while. Thanks to the person who mentioned Happy or Apie. I recognise his name as the one who erected a sign to persuade tourists to leave a cigarette for him Not that I saw a single tourist during our stay.

    I suspect that the 'hedonism' that some posters mentioned took place in Matala would be regarded as staid behaviour by youngsters nowadays.

    A few years later I found in Ko Samui a situation similar to that which Matala had in 1969. Now completely changed of course. Those were certainly the days.

    Reply

17. **Duncan | September 24, 2020 at 6:44 pm Edit**

    I have almost by accident come upon this blog post and am wildly excited (go figure!). I, too, was in Matala during the spring of 1969. I accompanied Tim Hitchcock and Jill (Tim!!! are you reading this?? So happy to see you are still kickin' and can't believe you are still in contact with Earhert!) after staying with them in Archanes. We had headed out to Matala in search of 2 friends of mine who we knew were in the Caves. I bunked in with my friends in the largest cave (the Community Cave). Some of the things I remember vividly are the sunsets, trips to Red Beach and Long Beach, and evening raids on the farmers' fields in Pitsidia for provisions. And "Ronnie" in a cave below us, who regularly traveled to Lebanon for hash and was always dropping into our cave at all hours to invite us back to his cave to "blow".

    Reply

18. **Ken Bole | October 30, 2020 at 2:00 am Edit**

    Lots of memories coming back from my relatively short time in Matala, January 1970. Caves full so we stayed in one of the small white buildings opposite. Memories vague due to non-stop hash smoking generously provided by several of the smugglers hoping to get some of it back to the States in their guitar cases. Highlight was Renee serving up chillums, and feeling possessed by ancient spirits the one night we spent in one the end caves, Only here to find out exactly when Joni was there- spring 69 or spring 70?

    Reply

    - **Stephen | October 30, 2020 at 1:23 pm Edit**

I was in Matala from Xmas 1968 and left in March 1969, just after the Hepatitis outbreak (which hit my friend Martha Costello) and just before the raids (when someone in the village reported our excavations to the Antiquities Police (Hello Amphibious!)). My green ’57 VW Beetle (with a ZA sticker and a Springbok painted on the rear) was the only car in Matala for all that time.
Joni was not there yet, nor was the Mermaid Taverna.
We had Delfini’s Taverna & lots of fun till the hoards arrived, and the caves overflowed till more than 100 folks slept on the beach, no thanks to the Life Magazine cover exposé.
Reply

- **Ken Bole | October 30, 2020 at 7:30 pm Edit**
  No hoards on the beach in January 1970 when we arrived. We rented on of the small huts opposite the caves, which were all occupied. I was alarmed to hear of ‘excavations’ of bones into the sea to make the caves roomier, and by the time I was back in Athens late January had heard of the police coming to get rid of the hippies. Good project for a serious journalist to sort out all the stories and make a book out of it.
- **amphibious | October 31, 2020 at 4:56 am Edit**
  G’day Steve and hi to Rita, hope the CA fires did you no harm, Time moves on.
  To Ken Bole (no REPLY button) on the excavations, may I suggest that you read the full story earlier in this thread.
  We revered what we found – it was the Antiquities police who smashed and pulverised everything that we had not managed to hide away.
  When asked why they said it was to a political decision to avoid any international attention given the dicey hold the junta then had on the country.
- **amphibious | January 1, 2022 at 11:57 am Edit**
  Could Stephan, Rita & Lynn and anyone else who remembers London John (velvet Biba trousers, big frizz, coollest kid to escape Henley-on-Thames) please contact me at laddiwee6@gmail.com re his latest (mis)adventures.
  As some may know he went on from Matala to Rhodos then, convinced that he heard the muezzin calling, set off for Kabul and points East where he has remained this last half century.
  Having qualified at Deoband he is now about to re-enter the maelstrom that is the new regime.
  He has been working for the last decade on a non sectarian madrassa in Jalallabad and has the support of the local power brokers.
- **RickvChelew | October 30, 2020 at 10:06 pm Edit**
  Joni was there in Spring 1970. I was there at that time, and have moe exact dates somewhere. Delfini’s and The Mermaid were both in full swing!

Reply

- **Liam Collins | June 27, 2021 at 2:01 am Edit**
  I actually saw one of the spirits while staying in the end cave far side of the beach. Quite high up. I woke about 3am, sat up on my tomb slab bed and saw A skinny bearded old man with a loin cloth. He froze and looked in at me during a bright moon lit night.. very freaky. Wasn't a dream or lost some head hippie.. it was very real..
  Reply

19. **Ricardo Graves | June 22, 2021 at 12:51 pm Edit**
    Matala Festival 2013 ….

1. **Reply**
2. **amphibious | June 29, 2021 at 11:29 am Edit**
   Just a shout out to Rita & Stephen & Lynn and anyone else pre 1970.
   I hope that you are all doing well in this Second Year of Plague.
   I'm still at the opposite end of the Earth, no prospect of crossing the Equator as I refuse to spend 26hrs in a flying silver petri test tube, even though vaccinated.
   Could this augur a return to slow steamer journeys, 6 week plus?
   Bit late for we oldies, but I'd grab the chance of a berth on one of the old Russian/CTC shipd, or the Queen of India which once ploughed the waves between Perth & Columbo.
   hmmm, Delta variant… maybe NOT the sub continent.
   Reply

- **Rita | June 29, 2021 at 9:48 pm Edit**
  amphibious…….Delta's legacy seems to be hanging over the world with images of funeral pyres lining the Ganges. I'm not ready to challenge the plague, but count myself lucky to have been vaccinated in a timely manner. I want to be free to choose any destination and GO, without fear of it being my final journey. Just hoping to stay healthy and alive until the all this crap has passed.
  All is not gloom and doom, I'm having a great amount of fun playing with and teaching, my 5 year old grand son how to read……it's a perfect exchange for all that has been lost.
  Always good to hear from you and all is well that ends well!
  Reply

  - **amphibious | July 15, 2021 at 12:48 pm Edit**
    Rita,
    your erstwhile email remains unanswered.

Have you a new one?
Mine is the same as ever.

- **amphibious | January 1, 2022 at 11:55 am Edit**
  Sorry, I don't seem to be able to properly navigate this site, despite years of trying.
  Could Stephan, Rita & Lynn and anyone else who remembers London John (velvet Biba trousers, big frizz, coollest kid to escape Henley-on-Thames) please contact me at laddiwee6@gmail.com re his latest (mis)adventures.
  As some may know he went on from Matala to Rhodos then, convinced that he heard the muezzin calling, set off for Kabul and points East where he has remained this last half century.
  Having qualified at Deoband he is now about to re-enter the maelstrom that is the new regime.
  He has been working for the last decade on a non sectarian madrassa in Jalallabad and has the support of the local power brokers.

3. **amphibious | August 20, 2021 at 2:01 pm Edit**
   Sorry, I don't seem to be able to properly navigate this site, despite years of trying.
   Could Stephan, Rita & Lynn and anyone else who remembers London John (velvet Biba trousers, big frizz, coollest kid to escape Henley-on-Thames) please contact me at laddiwee6@gmail.com re his latest (mis)adventures.
   As some may know he went on from Matala to Rhodos then, convinced that he heard the muezzin calling, set off for Kabul and points East where he has remained this last half century.
   Having qualified at Deoband he is now about to re-enter the maelstrom that is the new regime.
   He has been working for the last decade on a non sectarian madrassa in Jalallabad and has the support of the local power brokers.
   Reply

4. **ritaroberts | June 21, 2022 at 9:10 pm Edit**
   WOW !! So many memories from so many people. Would you believe I have lived on Crete for 20 years but I have never been to this Cave. Sounds wonderful. ,thanks for the likes on my blog, much appreciated.
   Reply